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NEA Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. MARCH 1986

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Timothy Savard/PHOTOWORKS

The Legacy of CHRISTA McAULIFFE

See pages 2 and 3

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Continuing Her Mission

The memory of the tragedy lingers, its imprint indelible.

Our sympathy and grief extend, still, to the families of the Challenger crew, but the pain remains especially deep for our colleague, Christa McAuliffe. Christa was one of us. In so many ways, she epitomized our dreams and aspirations for what teaching can and should be.

We remember that it was her dedication to children that led her to the space program. That desire to inspire and challenge America's children is her legacy to us.

The Challenger flight was special to America's children and their teachers. This was *our* flight. Christa McAuliffe was the one going into space, but she was taking each of us with her. And she would use her time in space to do what we do—to teach.

We couldn't wait for her to arrive in orbit. We had our bulletin boards filled with materials, our rooms covered with posters, our lesson plans ready.

Then came the horror. The sense of loss I felt as we all realized that something had gone terribly wrong remains, to this day, indescribable.

I immediately thought of Christa's family, especially her two small children who saw their mother taken from them in an instant. I thought of those third graders from her son's class who were on hand—not really knowing what had happened. I thought of Christa's students who were seeing this tragedy unfold live on national television.

And yes, I thought of the millions of children who were at that moment trying to understand what had happened—and looking to their teachers to find out why it had happened.

Each of us must come to grips with Christa's death in our own way. We must also help erase the pain and uncertainty our students feel.

You have, I know, already begun the caring work of helping your students understand. And you're doing a terrific job.

Joe Di Dio

NEA President
Mary Hatwood Futrell

But you must continue.

We must never forget that Christa McAuliffe was where she wanted to be. She had what she viewed as a golden opportunity—not just for herself, but for the children of America as well. She knew there were risks. But she thought the benefits outweighed those risks.

Christa McAuliffe was first and foremost a teacher. So many times, she stressed that her space flight was not a personal mission but a logical extension of what should be happening in every classroom in America—teachers reaching out in unique and personal ways to challenge our children to be all they can be.

Her energy, her vitality, her zest for life were infectious to everyone who met her. They were attributes she took to the classroom every day.

How do we make sense of this tragic loss? How do we turn this tragedy into positive action to assure America that there will be a succession of Christa McAuliffes in every classroom for generations to come? How do we ensure that Christa McAuliffe will not be forgotten?

She will not be forgotten if we all work to make her legacy a reality, if we all give our students 100 percent, if we each try to become the teacher that Christa always strove to be. If we, like Christa, inspire our children to dream of being all they can be—and help them realize those dreams—Christa will live within each of us.

And Christa will not be forgotten, because we in NEA are determined to keep her dream alive. We're creating a special and permanent NEA education fund to serve as a memorial to Christa McAuliffe.

But this fund will be much more than a memorial to an outstanding educator. It will be a living and active program that will remind the public that our future rests with the success of every dedicated teacher who works with an inquisitive child.

We shall miss you, Christa, but everyone who teaches or will ever teach thanks you for what you gave America and our profession. □

Grants from NEA's new Christa McAuliffe American Education Fund will be available to both aspiring and practicing teachers for a variety of purposes.

***Criteria for the grants will be established by a special committee and announced in the next issue of* NEA Today.**

Voluntary donations to the fund should be made to: Christa McAuliffe American Education Fund, American Security Bank, P.O. Box 0149, Washington, DC 20055.

THE NATION RESPONDS

'Nothing Ends Here'

"The crew of the space shuttle honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them nor the last time we saw them—this morning—as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye, and slipped the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God."

—President Ronald Reagan

◆

"By virtue of having been selected for the mission, McAuliffe became Everyteacher; a symbol of a profession whose business, after all, is the future. You may have felt as you watched that this was not only Ms. McAuliffe on board. She was Miss Murdock who taught you multiplication tables in the third grade. She was Mrs. Petersen, who taught you not to split infinitives. She was Mr. Alft, who thrilled you with the meaning of the Bill of Rights. No wonder we sat there absolutely devastated by the news that television was obliged to bring us."

—Tom Shales, The Washington Post

◆

"A special poignance attaches to the loss of Sharon Christa McAuliffe . . . . Her sunny enthusiasm, her just-folks charm, and her dedication to trying by her own example to 'demystify NASA and space flight' had captured the affections of her fellow citizens. Even more than the professional astronauts, she was one of us, a teacher, a mother, a wife."

—Editorial, The Philadelphia Inquirer

◆

"The idea that a teacher was on the shuttle with high expectations to expand science information for our children, and the fact that her husband and children were there and the students that she taught were watching, and the sight of the pain and grief on their faces . . . all that was enough to really shake one's foundations."

—The Rev. Jesse Jackson, chair, National Rainbow Coalition

◆

"What these seven people did was leave us an example, not just . . . of how to die, but of how to live: that we ought to be reaching out to the stars, and looking ahead . . . . They have shown us how Americans can dare to dream. They have shown us that nothing should make us hesitate. We ought to seek knowledge. We ought to understand science, and we ought to have courage to live accordingly. Christa thought it was a great honor, but she never forgot who she was. She was a teacher."

—The Rev. Chester R. Mrowka, St. Peter's Catholic Church, Concord, N.H.

◆

"Though she didn't have the opportunity to teach those live lessons from space, Christa had already taught us a great deal. Her plans to return to New Hampshire to teach after her year with NASA told us she cared about her students in a very special way. Christa showed us that teaching can be a form of loving. If one of us had been aboard that flight instead of her, she wouldn't have faltered—she'd have been the first in line to go on the next flight."

—Richard Methia, Teacher-in-Space finalist, New Bedford, Mass.

"Christa was a tremendous human being who could relate to other human beings in a caring, kind, thoughtful way. She loved youngsters, she loved teaching . . . . When she smiled, she radiated a sense of living, a sense of joy that was upholding to us all."

—Charles Foley, principal, Concord (N.H.) High School

◆

"The explosion of the space shuttle Challenger was nothing less than a tragedy. . . . There are no words to express the tremendous sense of loss I feel. They carried our hopes and dreams with them; let us carry their memory with us."

—Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, former astronaut

◆

"Christa was a very caring person. She taught American history through the diaries and journals of common people—women crossing the country in Conestoga wagons. She believed the measure of history is the measure of how people lived, and not necessarily the gains and losses of political campaigns or battles."

—Michael Metcalf, Teacher-in-Space finalist, Hardwick, Vt.

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A LASTING LEGACY

Sharon Christa McAuliffe

September 2, 1948–January 28, 1986

That cold, shattering January day will remain with all of us for a long time.

So many words have already been written about the space shuttle catastrophe and its impact on the nation's students and teachers, thousands of whom watched from their classrooms. Is there anything left to say?

All our hearts were with Christa McAuliffe as the ill-fated Challenger rose into the Florida skies. A high school social studies teacher, an NEA member, Christa was one of us. When suddenly she was gone, a part of each of us was gone too.

Millions of Americans—but educators especially—felt we had known Christa. Years from now, what we'll remember won't be that terrible instant; we'll remember *her.*

For Christa represented the very best of our profession. Vibrant, upbeat, energetic, courageous, she was full of enthusiasm for teaching—and for life.

She challenged America's children to reach for the world beyond their grasp, to pursue excellence, not to be afraid to fail.

She reminded America that education belongs in the forefront of any plans for the future, because education and learning are uniquely *about* the future.

Christa taught her history students that 'ordinary people' can have an impact on history. She brought that lesson home to the whole country by becoming the first 'ordinary' American to reach for space.

But her legacy goes far beyond that. Christa McAuliffe has renewed the public's respect for the teaching profession and rekindled in us a special pride in what we do. She has inspired young people to think about teaching as an exciting career.

Despite our grief over the untimely deaths of Christa and the six other crew members, we must continue the quest to learn more about space, to make sure that others will have the chance to carry out the work Christa and her colleagues began. □

DARK AGES . . .

Bringing Social Studies

New Jersey Newsphotos

Despite some undiscriminating curriculums, blurred subject boundaries, and charges that America's students have become historically and geographically illiterate, imaginative social studies teachers are restoring the good name to an embattled field.

Jacob Riis is railing against living conditions for the poor in New York. A rakish tweed hat and thick stogie give him the look of a crime reporter who's made good—and that's just what he is.

"That's right," he chirps. "My book *How the Other Half Lives* made quite a hit when it came out in 1890. But I'll still go on writing and lecturing on reforms in the tenement-house district."

Frederick Law Olmstead, a bearded man in straw hat and overalls, is quick to jump in.

"Parks are important to relieve urban overcrowding," he asserts. "In my recent report on landscape architecture I showed how towns and cities can be reformed through aesthetic land use."

Nineteen turn-of-the-century reformers with dandyish mustaches, greying hair, full-length gowns, and purple judicial robes carry on this "meeting of the minds" until the clanging bell signals a palpable time shift.

It's 1986 in Roseanne Lorenc's advanced placement American historiography class at Fair Lawn (N.J.) High School. Today's costumed roundtable discussion is the culmination of each student's research on a turn-of-the-century reformer.

"You know, when we do this exercise, it's no longer 1986; it's the early 1900s," says 11th grade student Wendy Schoenberger, alias Margaret Sanger. "You really understand the times and people in a way you never could by just writing an essay. You get to know historical characters inside out."

As the bell rings, Eugene Debs and Samuel Gompers—stripped down to Nikes, jeans, and rugby shirts—go out the door still discussing the role of organized labor in improving the conditions of the working class.

Despite the best efforts of Roseanne Lorenc *(pictured above)* and other creative teachers from coast to coast, critics contend that, in general, the social studies are lost in the dark ages.

Social studies instruction, they charge, is "boring," "alarmingly ineffectual," "driven by fads and political whims," "a mishmash of watered-down content areas."

The accusations are everywhere:

► John Agresto, acting chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, claims "Americans may know less today about their culture and history than at any time in our nation's history."

► *Newsweek* reports a test showing that community college students in one northwestern state believe Mark Twain was the inventor of the cotton gin, Jefferson Davis was a rock musician, and Socrates was a famous Indian chief.

► According to preliminary results from a new National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test of American 17-year-olds' knowledge of U.S. history:

- Two-thirds couldn't place the Civil War in the correct half-century.
- One-third didn't know that the Declaration of Independence was signed between 1750 and 1800.
- Three-fourths couldn't identify Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, E. E. Cummings, or Carl Sandburg.
- One-third didn't know that Columbus sailed for the New World before 1750.

Decrying the state of history instruction in the nation's schools, education historian Diane Ravitch in a recent *New York Times* magazine article puts much of the blame on the "ill-defined" nature of the social studies.

"One study concluded that social studies teachers 'have given up on any attempt to agree on what their students should learn,' " she points out. "Social studies now embraces aspects of such diverse concerns as energy education, environmental education, gun-control education, future studies, consumer education, free-enterprise education, and a host of other courses."

By definition, social studies teachers comprise "those who teach geography, American or state history, anthropology, economics, ethnic studies, government, world history, psychology, civics, or other social studies," according to *A Descriptive Profile of High School Social Studies Teachers*, developed by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

The 22,800-member National Council for the Social Studies has issued a 117-page book, *Defining the Social Studies*. Its introduction states bluntly, "Social studies has an identity crisis."

The Council is calling for a national reform effort to resolve that crisis by the year 2000. This year it plans to establish a national commission on the social

. . . OR RENAISSANCE?

Teaching to Life

studies to design a social studies curriculum for the 21st century.

Yet the so-called identity crisis hasn't stopped school systems that really care about the social studies from developing thoughtful curriculums.

In Greenwich, Conn., for example, a carefully sequenced approach to social studies keeps the field manageable for the more than 190 teachers who do some social studies instructing. Greenwich has 7,200 students in nine elementary schools, three junior highs, and one high school.

About eight years ago, a committee of 15 social studies teachers from throughout the district started evaluating the entire K-12 social studies curriculum to clarify both the rationale for the program and the connections between the subjects taught at each age level. The committee established a developmental profile of the student at each grade level, showing what he or she is capable of, from simple memorization to higher-order thinking skills.

From that profile, the committee matched up social studies content for each grade—deciding, for instance, that all seventh grade students would study world cultures, getting a good grounding in western civilization that would lead into a study of American history in eighth grade.

At the junior high level, the committee decided to weave elements of economics, sociology, and anthropology into the history courses, so that by senior high, students would have a sense of how these social sciences come into play. Not until the second semester of 11th grade are Greenwich students given the opportunity to take electives in social sciences.

"Developing a standard, 'core' social studies curriculum for all students enabled us to address a lot of problems we teachers had been having as individuals, such as our feeling that the curriculum wasn't sequential enough," notes Greenwich High senior social studies teacher Chris Kazanas. "We've solved the problem of students coming to us lacking knowledge they should have picked up in previous years. And because we as teachers were involved in the development of the curriculum, we've been more committed to seeing that it works in the classroom."

What are other Association members doing in their social studies classrooms to make their subject come to life for today's students? A random sampling:

► At Roosevelt Elementary School in West Bloomfield, Mich., Frieda Mitchell introduces her first graders to their first social studies unit: your neighbors and your neighborhood. They study a flat map of their city and then construct a three-dimensional replica. Shoeboxes, toilet paper rolls, and cereal boxes become the office buildings, stoplights, telephone poles, and private homes that define the community. The emphasis: learning that's fun.

► Poland (Ohio) Seminary High School teacher Milton Kochert brings American government discussions to the school's computer room, where students keypunch their own answers to questions relating to five social issues, five political issues, and five economic issues on a terminal. At the conclusion of the exercise, Kochert's computerized program tells each student whether his or her political leanings are more Democratic, Republican, or Independent.

► Fair Lawn, N.J., social studies teacher Roseanne Lorenc, whose turn-of-the-century "meeting of the minds" activity began this account, believes the reason many students dislike history is that they reject rote memorization of facts, dates, wars, and battles. Such teaching approaches fail to spark their interest. So, instead, she emphasizes the role of *people* in the drama of history and politics, knowing that once students are drawn in by the human intrigue, they'll pick up the facts and dates on their own.

A total of 82,524 public school teachers nationwide list social studies as their first-, second-, or third-most-frequently taught subject.

But while more than half of all social studies teachers have earned graduate degrees, the field's diverse subject matter specializations sometimes force teachers to handle an area they haven't been trained to teach. A former Massachusetts teacher reports being assigned to teach geography after having taken only three credit hours in the field, while a Minnesota instructor was forced to bone up in summer school for an economics class he'd been assigned—and felt unprepared for—the previous year.

One midwestern high school teacher who teaches nine different 10-week social studies courses a year may exemplify the curriculum crisis national leaders speak of. This year alone he's teaching ancient history, modern world history, American history, Civil War to World War II, World War II only, the 1950s and 60s, sociology, modern problems, and government.

A few years ago, this Association member was notified—five days before school started—that he'd be teaching a brand new course in modern industrial society.

"It's a juggling act to keep up," he admits. "The biggest problem is trying to be knowledgeable enough to guide my students. I'm lucky: I majored in both history and political science. But no one has six different majors."

Social studies teachers, particularly those who've fought off attempts to turn social studies into a jack-of-all-trades curriculum, continue to find classroom success. As they sift and winnow and define a curriculum that teaches who Socrates and Jefferson Davis are and prepares youngsters to be responsible citizens in a democracy, they take pride in helping students understand the best of what their culture has to pass along.

—Vicky Lytle

Joe Di Dio

Putting GEOGRAPHY Back on the Map

A hundred years ago, school geography texts asked students to "bound" every state and territory in the nation and to "state the situation" of their capital cities. They also expected students to know such facts as where "Indo-China" was and that it consisted principally of "Anam, Siam, and Birmah."

Today, horror stories about what young Americans *don't* know about geography are everywhere: the 69 percent of college students who couldn't name one of the 30 nations between the Sahara Desert and South Africa; the Gallup poll item showing that more than one in four teenagers couldn't name the country that borders Texas.

Over the past 50 years, in most school districts, geography has gradually fallen through the cracks. It's seldom taught as a separate subject except in some junior high curriculums. In many districts geography is supposed to be integrated into other social studies courses, such as history or economics—but it often isn't.

Contrary to popular opinion, though, geography is not dead. It's actually enjoying somewhat of a resurgence, in part due to a corps of enthusiastic, knowledgeable geography teachers in public schools across the country. Unlike their 19th century predecessors, they want students to know not only the *where* of geography, but also the *why there*.

Or, as Catherine Jorgensen of High Point High School in Prince George's County, Md. (*seen above with her ninth grade world geography students*), puts it: "I want my students to think geographically, rather than memorize."

These enthusiasts are being listened to, thanks to increased public awareness of the importance of geographic literacy, suggests James Marran, social studies chair at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Ill. "Geographic literacy involves interrelationships among regions, not just location or place geography," Marran adds.

Also helping spread the new geography are major projects of the organizations of professional geographers, including college geography teachers. In 1985, the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) and the Association of American Geographers (AAG) published *Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools* (28 pp., $3). It outlines the geographic skills and understandings that children can learn in grades K-12.

NCGE and AAG have also set up the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP) to develop detailed new course outlines and teaching materials, organize model teacher training programs, and help set up networks of geographically savvy educators. For copies of the *Guidelines* and information about GENIP, write AAG at 1710 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

The National Geographic Society, a member of GENIP, has its own Geography Education Program, too. The Society is developing a model for action that can be adopted by schools, universities, and corporations interested in working together to improve geography education. This year the Society will also offer its first Summer Geography Institute for precollege teachers. For more information, write the National Geographic Society at 17th and M Sts., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, attn. Susan Munroe.

And don't overlook two journals aimed at geography teachers: *Journal of Geography*, published by NCGE at Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL 61455 (write for membership information), and *Teaching Geography*, published at the University of Leicester, School of Education, 21 University Rd., Leicester LE1 7RF, UK, for $28 US a year.

—Nancy R. Needham

HUMAN RIGHTS

A Holy War for Young Minds
Humanist Teachings Under Attack Across Nation
Board delays school policy on freedom
Hawkins School Board Delays Action
Hawkins, text-firm officials huddle on reading book
COBS parents file lawsuit in Hawkins textbook dispute
Hawkins text fight heats up
New Hearing Ordered In Textbook Lawsuit
Our comment
An assault on public education
Hawkins text dispute reaches 'impasse'
Citizens To Sue Hawkins School Board
Hawkins Textbook Battle To Go Second Round

Schools Sued Over 'Secular Humanism'

In two separate legal battles, parents' groups in Church Hill, Tenn., and Mobile, Ala., are trying to declare public education unconstitutional.

They claim that schools cannot avoid teaching religion and religious values and that by attempting to be neutral, schools are in fact advancing the "religion of secular humanism." Therefore, they submit, schools are discriminating against students of other religions and violating their constitutional rights.

On March 24, 11 Tennessee families will get a chance to test their new "civil rights" strategy in district court. They will be represented by Concerned Women for America (CWA), a national right-wing organization, and lawyer Michael Farris, who got his experience working for the Moral Majority in a similar (and ultimately unsuccessful) case in Washington State.

The Tennessee case, *Mozert v. Hawkins County Schools*, names as defendants the school superintendent, school board, and four principals—two of whom are members of, and represented by, the Tennessee Education Association.

The suit, initially filed over two years ago, alleges that a Holt, Rinehart & Winston textbook series is "anti-American and anti-Christian." CWA claims the literature reading series called "Riders on the Earth" teaches values that conflict with the plaintiffs' religious beliefs.

The books, according to the plaintiffs, advocate witchcraft, idol worship, the theory of evolution, situational ethics, values clarification, euthanasia, and disobedience to parents—all examples, they say, of "the religion of secular humanism."

One plaintiff even claimed in a letter to a local newspaper that students' moral values are endangered when they read that Goldilocks is not punished for trespassing on and disregarding the property of others.

CWA's stated goal is the assignment of an alternate required reading series that will accommodate their religious values.

However, CWA's lawyer, Michael Farris, has stated that he believes this case and others like it will "foster political activity by Christians, and the result will be increased pressure on the public schools.

"We may even see alternatives to public school constitutionally mandated," he suggested in an interview last year.

Meanwhile, in Mobile, Alabama, a group of over 600 parents, students, and ministers are suing the school board, charging that textbooks in seven subject areas unconstitutionally advance "the religion of secular humanism."

A 170-page legal brief has been filed on behalf of the plaintiffs with help from the Rutherford Institute, a "legal and education foundation" formed by John Whitehead in 1982. Whitehead, formerly head of the Moral Majority's Legal Defense Foundation, is the author of *Parents' Rights* and a participant in what he has called the "ideological battle to determine who's going to win the schools."

What do the plaintiffs find in conflict with their religious beliefs? Texts that suggest that sex roles in society change, that family leadership can be shared instead of held solely by the husband, and that there are "no absolute rights or wrongs."

As further evidence, the Rutherford Institute is using a study released recently by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute of Education (NIE). The study, "Religion and Traditional Values in Public School Textbooks," claims that all 40 social studies textbooks analyzed are biased against religion.

"The books are so written as to represent a systematic denial of the history, heritage, beliefs, and values of a very large segment of the American people," the NIE study concludes.

Plaintiffs in the Alabama case hope to stop the use of textbooks and teacher materials that allegedly advance "humanism," inhibit Christianity, or censor the role of religion in the U.S. and in the world.

These new cases, like those that have gone before them, center on the extremely vague definition of "secular humanism," which some say is a "belief in man, rather than a belief in God." Formal definitions aside, the term "secular humanism" has been used by right-wing activists to refer to anything they object to in the public schools, from the teaching of evolution, health and sex education, drug and alcohol abuse education, and international understanding to the asking of open-ended questions that don't assume "absolute values."

While those involved in attempts to censor materials seem to have no trouble defining the term, others doubt that plaintiffs in these cases will be able to make a legal definition of "secular humanism" as a religion stand up in court.

—Stefanie Weiss

WASHINGTON WATCH

Policy Making in the Age of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings

Nothing short of a massive overhaul of the federal budget-making process is under way as part of Congress' effort to trim the bloated federal deficit. Under the unprecedented 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Balanced Budget Amendment, that overhaul could mean massive losses of federal funds from education and other social programs over the next five years.

The sobering budget figures are only part of the problem. It's the process by which the cuts will be made that's evoking much of the controversy over the new law. For the first time, the prospects for reasoned congressional decision making are being replaced with a stark agenda of mechanical, across-the-board cuts. In this new approach to policy making, the budget ax could fall on education programs indiscriminately, without benefit of congressional deliberation.

How does the new law work? It's designed to eliminate the federal deficit by fiscal year 1991, by imposing ever-shrinking deficit targets each year. If Congress doesn't meet them, a system of across-the-board cutbacks is activated.

Projections for the current fiscal year's deficit, for instance, now exceed the $171.9 billion target set for the year. So—on cue—an *automatic* trigger will go into effect March 1 to pare $11.7 billion evenly from federal spending for domestic programs and defense. This will mean a 4.9 percent cut from defense and a 4.3 percent cut from most social programs.

As a result, the Department of Education stands to lose some $700 million in the current fiscal year, reducing the $18.4 billion currently set for federal aid-to-education programs to $17.7 billion.

These projected reductions will affect existing programs as shown here:

FY 86 (1986-87 school year) reductions in education spending

Program	Cut by
Compensatory education for the disadvantaged	$158,900,000
Special programs, including science and math education and magnet schools	30,300,000
State block grants	21,500,000
Vocational and adult education	40,700,000
Bilingual education	7,400,000
Education for the handicapped	60,600,000
Postsecondary education/student financial assistance	210,100,000
Libraries	5,483,000

After these relatively "gentle" first-year cuts, the law goes into high gear with more dramatic reductions. For FY 87, which begins this October, the balanced-budget amendment calls for spending cutbacks of 27 to 30 percent, to trim the deficit down to the $144 billion the law targets. Since most education programs are "forward funded" (the money is authorized a year before it's spent), the pinch will really be felt in the 1987-88 school year.

So far, a handful of expenditures deemed essential, like interest payments on the national debt, Social Security benefits, and some "safety-net" programs for the poor, are the only ones exempted from the automatic cutbacks. Yet NEA leaders contend that education and other social programs are national priorities too, representing an investment in the nation's economic health. (Budget analysts figure every dollar spent on education yields $6 in increased productivity.)

At press time, the implications of the indiscriminate slashing of federal programs had prompted a federal court suit challenging the legality of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law. Reps. Mike Synar (D-Okla.), Silvio Conte (R-Mass.), and others contend that the legislation unconstitutionally shifts power from Congress to the Executive Branch, by delegating to unelected government officials Congress's constitutional responsibility to appropriate funds.

However the courts may have resolved the question by the time you read this, Gramm-Rudman-Hollings' new approach to decision making raises serious questions about who is shouldering the responsibility for public policies.

For the nation's lawmakers, who've made debate and deliberation as ubiquitous as a handshake, this new "hands off" approach represents an unprecedented abdication of responsibility, NEA leaders warn.

—Vicky Lytle

Local Look

CALIFORNIA

A new contract bargained by United Teachers–Los Angeles (UTLA) provides for a 6.4 percent pay increase retroactive to July 1985 for 32,000 school employees and raises the starting salary to $20,298. Teachers on the top salary step will get an additional 1 percent.

Bargaining didn't go as smoothly in the Bay Area, where it took a four-week strike this winter by Oakland Education Association (OEA) members to secure a decent contract.

But on January 31, OEA members celebrated their unity as they ratified an agreement providing for 20 percent salary increases over three years.

The contract also specifies that by the end of the 1987-88 school year, the average Oakland teacher's salary will rise to the midpoint of teacher salaries in California's 20 largest urban districts. Salaries in Oakland, the state's sixth largest district, are currently so far below those in the other big urbans that this clause will mean an additional 10 percent salary increase.

CONNECTICUT

A brand-new local in the rural town of Union is the latest beneficiary of the Connecticut Education Association's statewide campaign to win higher salaries.

The tiny local, which affiliated with CEA in the spring of 1985, negotiated a whopping 16 percent one-year salary hike last fall in its first trip to the bargaining table, accompanied by a CEA bargaining consultant.

The Teachers Education Association of Union's first master contract also spells out 24 previously ambiguous terms of employment, defining the teacher evaluation process, a four-step grievance procedure, and the district's reduction-in-force policy.

"We wanted to affiliate with a professional association because we felt the need for a clearly defined contract," notes TEA of Union President Monica Wasco. "But we're really delighted with the size of our paychecks."

TEXAS

Big membership gains have become common among Texas State Teachers Association affiliates this year, with some 20 locals so far reporting figures 100 percent or more above last year's totals.

Leading the group is the Association of Brownsville Educators (AOBE), which serves both teachers and education support staff in the Mexican border community. Membership there has almost tripled—from 278 to 828.

AOBE President Minerva Esparza attributes the local's success to political action.

"Being involved in the last school board elections got us a pro-education majority on the board," Esparza notes. "That meant educators could expect fair treatment."

Statewide, more than half of TSTA's 600 locals are showing membership gains of at least 10 percent. Reasons for the growth vary from place to place, but one big factor everywhere, reports TSTA President Charles Beard, is "the failure of the 1984 education reform act to work for Texas teachers and students." (*See related story under 'West' on page 8.*)

"Texas teachers increasingly see the need for a strong Association to represent them," Beard explains. "The evidence for that is in our membership computer: the names of more than 12,000 new members who were teaching in the state last year but did not belong to TSTA/NEA."

IOWA

Custodians and secretaries at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge have won their first contract after a 15-month struggle.

For years the 43-member Iowa Central Community College Classified Employees Association had shied away from collective bargaining because members felt they were treated fairly. But in 1984 the college hired a new superintendent who changed all that.

The new management took away employees' leaves, threatened to replace custodians with lower-paid workers, and began what Association leaders call "harassment" of people active in ICCCCEA.

"We decided we had to protect ourselves, so we called in the Iowa State Education Association," explains last year's local president, Roger Graham. "Management did most of our organizing for us."

The 15-month battle for a contract ended with an arbitrator's awarding the custodians an average package increase of 15.2 percent, including pay for guaranteed overtime they'd lost. Secretaries got an 8.6 percent increase, which includes pay for extra hours they're now required to work.

"We stuck together," Graham reports. "We're stronger than ever. If they couldn't break us up during the 15 months, they sure can't do it now."

WYOMING

So far this school year the Carbon County District #2 school board is running a 3.6 out of a possible 4.0 grade point average. Awarding the grades are the members of the Carbon County District #2 Education Association, who decided last fall that one way to open new lines of communication to both board and community would be to evaluate board decisions and print the results in a newspaper ad.

"Board members' reactions have been mixed," Association President Jack Patrick reports. "Some even deny seeing the ads. But ordinary citizens have said they're impressed at our concern for what happens to our students.

How does the Association pick the decisions on which to grade the board?

"We send an observer to every board meeting, who reports back to a membership meeting," Patrick explains. "We decide which two or three issues were key, and then each member gives the board a letter grade with comments on those issues. The PR committee averages the grades for each issue, pulls out comments that typify the teacher consensus, and that's what we send to the press."

TENNESSEE

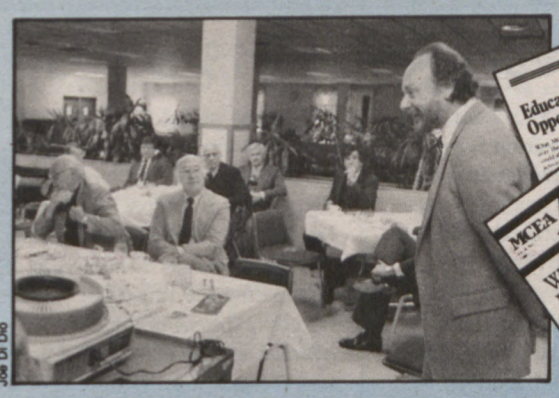
The Memphis Education Association has developed a homework hotline that offers students the help of specialists without requiring a full assortment of members to spend evenings in the Association office.

Each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m., teachers staff four phones in the MEA office. When a student calls, a teacher takes down name, phone number, and subject or grade, then calls the most appropriate of the more than 50 teachers around the city who have signed up to help out. That teacher calls the student back and works out the difficulty.

"Students not only receive the services of specialists," points out MEA public relations chair Evelyn Crawford, "but lines stay free for more student calls."

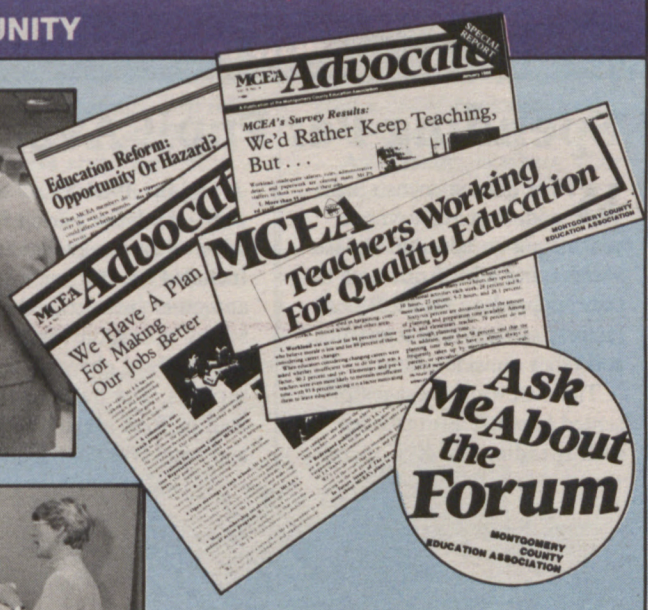
When the hotline began in January, 10 or 15 calls came in each night, but within a few weeks the phones were constantly ringing. □

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY



Joe Di Dio

MCEA


MCEA Advocate
Education Reform: Opportunity Or Hazard?
MCEA's Survey Results:
We'd Rather Keep Teaching, But . . .
MCEA Advocate
We Have A Plan For Making Our Jobs Better
MCEA
Teachers Working For Quality Education
MONTGOMERY COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
Ask Me About the Forum
MONTGOMERY COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Left: MCEA President Mark Simon and Vice-President Phyllis Robinson help conduct one of the Montgomery County local's public forums. Top photo: Seth Goldberg, Association member, speaks to Lions Club members at a follow-up session.

Maryland Teachers Become PR Specialists

The Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) in suburban Washington, D.C., is now halfway through a year-long campaign aimed at helping the public understand that achieving excellence in education will be teachers' prime goal in next fall's contract negotiations.

The project, launched last September by newly elected leaders of the 5,000-member local, carries a simple and straightforward message. Local teachers, MCEA is pointing out, are already providing students with a good education—despite serious obstacles. But better education depends on improved teaching conditions.

"We need to ally with parents and with organizations—such as the PTA, NAACP, and NOW—that support public education and together make the same demands for better schools," says MCEA President Mark Simon. "To make progress at the bargaining table, we need the public to see us as part of a community coalition that agrees on what must be done to improve education."

At the core of MCEA's program to build community alliances are three Association-sponsored public forums, each run simultaneously at some 20 school sites around the county. The first forum took place last November. Others will follow this month and later this year.

Forum themes are questions at the heart of the learning process: Quality Education: Are We Giving Teachers a Chance to Teach? Quality Education: What Tools Do Teachers Need? and Quality Education: What Does It Cost?

MCEA members have been specially trained by the local to organize, facilitate, and coordinate discussion groups at the forums. They're also conducting follow-up presentations at meetings of city and county organizations. Those meetings typically feature an MCEA introductory slide show, a talk by a teacher, and a question-and-answer period.

To reinforce the forums' impact, MCEA leaders are appearing on radio and TV talk shows and submitting op-ed pieces to area newspapers.

"The campaign's working in ways we never imagined," says Simon. "The public is getting a better understanding of issues like planning time and professional development—and teachers are developing the skills and confidence to talk with the public about education." □

State Side

WEST

Some 212,000 Texas teachers, administrators, and other certified school employees must pass the Texas Examination for Current Administrators and Teachers (TECAT) when it's given March 10 or lose their certificates—and their jobs, since those who fail will have lost their "paper" qualifications to teach.

TECAT is the test of reading and writing skills mandated for certified educators by the Texas legislature in 1984.

To prepare members to take the test, the Texas State Teachers Association this winter offered them a free four-hour workshop. Some 60,000 members participated.

Linda Whitehurst, an English teacher in Plano, was one of the 250 TSTA members trained to present the workshop, which was given in more than 700 sessions throughout the state.

"TSTA was the only educator group in Texas to offer its members such comprehensive training at no charge," Whitehurst says. "We began the workshop with sample test items, which we scored on the spot so people could see immediately any test areas they might be weak in.

"The rest of the workshop focused on test-taking strategies," she explains. "At the end, every participant left with a 150-page manual, specially prepared for home study. Both the workshop and the manual were developed by experts in teacher testing, and NEA and TSTA jointly financed the entire project."

NORTHEAST

The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) has urged the state board of education to consider the fiscal inequities that may send the dropout rate soaring under a newly adopted High School Proficiency Test, scheduled to go into effect this April.

The new standardized reading, writing, and mathematics exam will be given initially to ninth graders, who must earn a passing grade on it by graduation.

To begin denying high school diplomas to students who have otherwise earned them but who fail the exam, Association leaders fear, may catapult dropout rates for students beyond the 40 percent rate predicted by the state department of education.

Low-spending urban districts may be particularly hard hit, warns NJEA.

The Association opposes the use of a paper-and-pencil test as a make-or-break determinant of graduation. But it is backing the state commissioner of education's budget request, which could help districts adjust to the new test by significantly increasing compensatory education funds for at least one year.

Contends NJEA President Dennis Giordano, "We'll do everything we can to support the commissioner's request and to prevent our system from pushing out students who want to remain in school."

PACIFIC

Idaho's economy is in trouble— and so are its public schools. With Idaho already ranking near the bottom of the 50 states on education funding, schools have been hit hard by the depression in agriculture, mining, and timber.

Districts throughout Idaho have reduced art, music, physical education, and vocational programs. In some schools, teachers can't assign any homework that involves taking home textbooks, because as many as four classes share the same books. Idaho teachers' salaries are 10th lowest in the nation.

A group of major business leaders is now calling for a tax hike for education, warning that the state can't recover economically unless public schools are adequately funded.

But the legislature is firmly under the control of ultraconservatives—some of whom oppose public education per se. "Our legislature shows no indication of even considering an increase in school funding," says IEA President Joyce Rausch.

At press time, IEA was planning a rally at the legislature, inviting parents, school board members, administrators, and businesspeople to come and show the legislators that the people of Idaho really do care about education.

MID-ATLANTIC

The road to equitable funding for education has been a long and rocky one in West Virginia.

In November 1984, voters narrowly defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that would have increased school dollars and helped equalize teacher salaries, which vary widely among the state's 55 counties.

Legislators then tried another route, hoping to boost revenues in counties where property has been taxed on the basis of outdated appraisals of its value. Not surprisingly, those counties tend to be the ones where teacher salaries are lowest.

Last year all property in the state was reevaluated by either the state department of taxation or an independent assessment firm. The reappraisals were to be phased in over 10 years, with property owners paying 10 percent of their eventual tax increase the first year, 20 percent the second year, and so on. The additional taxes were earmarked for education, of which teacher salaries are a large part.

But now property owners are appealing the reappraisals. To prevent further delay, the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) has joined forces with several professional, occupational, and civic groups to try to persuade the legislature to authorize collection of taxes based on the reappraised values while the appeals are pending.

"Reappraisal is the only logical solution to our funding crisis," explains WVEA president Tom Vogel. "It will help provide money for total equalization, which we estimate will take $60 million. The governor's current budget calls for just $5.6 million for teacher salary equalization this year."

SOUTHEAST

NEA's affiliate in Puerto Rico, the 21,000-member Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (AMPR), is celebrating its diamond anniversary year. Founded June 8, 1911, AMPR is proud of its 75-year history of accomplishments "not only for teachers but also for our communities and the Puerto Rican people," says AMPR president Jose Veles.

In every part of the island, the Association is organizing special performances—free to members—of currently running Puerto Rican plays, including classics that show up in the curriculum. Other anniversary observances will include a special issue of AMPR's cultural magazine, special programs in its radio series, and special cultural and professional seminars for members.

MIDWEST

The exploitation of faculty who work full time but get paid like part-timers has been a hot issue in higher education for several years. Now the North Dakota Education Association, on behalf of one of its members, has challenged this exploitation—and won.

Muriel Brown had been employed as an English "lecturer" at North Dakota State University for 12 years. She performed full-time instructional duties but was paid what amounted to a part-time salary. She should have been eligible for tenure after six years, but the university kept her off the tenure track, rehiring her on a year-to-year basis instead.

When Brown and NDEA went to court, the university moved to dismiss the case on the grounds that it had no legal basis, and a district court agreed. Undaunted, NDEA and Brown appealed to the state supreme court, which sent the case back to district court for trial.

Three months before Brown's suit was to come to trial, the university settled with her, placing her on the tenure track, changing her title from lecturer to assistant professor, and raising her salary from $13,500 a year to over $22,000.

Brown's settlement could benefit many other full-time faculty with various part-time labels that allow their employers to take financial advantage of them—a practice NDEA labels "the closest thing to slavery" in the state. Some full-time North Dakota faculty with part-time status earn as little as $10,000 a year. □

HOW DOES YOUR STATE RATE?

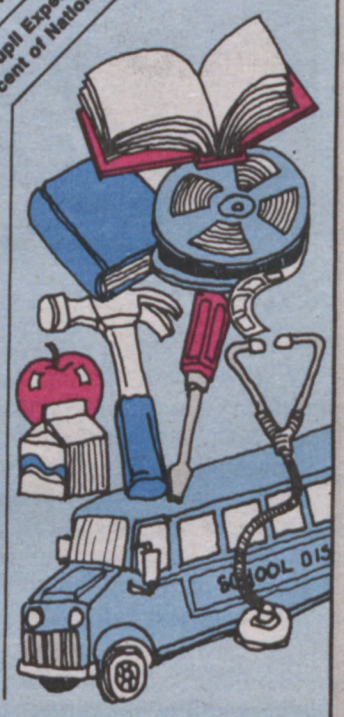
Spending Per Pupil Averages $3,413 a Year

What does it cost to provide a student with a year of public education? That varies quite a bit from state to state, depending on local cost factors, student characteristics, and other considerations.

The statewide averages presented here are estimates of total spending per K-12 pupil during the 1984-85 school year—the latest period for which data are available. Included are teacher salaries and other instructional costs, school operations, maintenance, fixed charges, health services, and transportation, as well as food service net costs and employer contributions to retirement funds.

In real terms, per-pupil spending nationwide has grown 31 percent in the past decade. In 1974-75, it averaged $1,286; today it averages $3,413. But eliminating the impact of inflation by expressing the current average in constant 1975 dollars reduces it to $1,686. □

	Estimated Expenditure Per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance, 1984-85	Per-Pupil Expenditure as Percent of National Average
1. Alaska	$6,867	201%
2. New York	5,219	153
3. New Jersey	5,085	149
4. Wyoming	4,961	145
5. Dist. of Col.	4,785	140
6. Connecticut	4,438	130
7. Rhode Island	4,332	127
8. Delaware	4,155	122
9. Maryland	4,038	118
10. Pennsylvania	4,002	117
11. Montana	3,968	116
12. Oregon	3,963	116
13. Massachusetts	3,889	114
14. Wisconsin	3,880	114
15. Vermont	3,783	111
16. Kansas	3,668	107
17. North Dakota	3,608	106
18. Hawaii	3,596	105
19. Colorado	3,536	104
20. Illinois	3,517	103
21. Washington	3,437	101
22. Michigan	3,434	101
23. Florida	3,427	100
UNITED STATES	3,413	100
24. Iowa	3,409	100
25. Minnesota	3,396	100
26. Ohio	$3,315	97%
27. California	3,296	97
28. New Mexico	3,278	96
29. Texas	3,161	93
30. Nebraska	3,128	92
31. Virginia	3,043	89
32. Maine	3,038	89
33. New Hampshire	2,964	87
34. Missouri	2,901	85
35. Oklahoma	2,901	85
36. West Virginia	2,866	84
37. Nevada	2,848	83
38. South Dakota	2,813	82
39. Louisiana	2,806	82
40. Kentucky	2,792	82
41. South Carolina	2,740	80
42. Arizona	2,695	79
43. Georgia	2,682	79
44. Indiana	2,638	77
45. North Carolina	2,588	76
46. Arkansas	2,498	73
47. Tennessee	2,349	69
48. Idaho	2,290	67
49. Alabama	2,241	66
50. Mississippi	2,205	65
51. Utah	2,183	64



Source: NEA Research

RESOURCES

Good Reading. . . About the Folks Next Door

Teachers and librarians recommend books on 'ordinary people'—unsung heroes that students want to know better.

Rock stars and sports figures get a lot of press, but the people who keep life going in this country—the shopkeepers and farmers, the bus drivers and textile workers (and yes, the teachers, too)—are unknown heroes, often even to their own children.

Young Americans can easily grow up thinking work is just a way people get money to buy a few groceries...or a Walkman cassette. They see around them little evidence that work in itself can be rewarding or that any job done well is reason for pride.

How many books for young people show the way ordinary Americans—the people across the street or across town—live and work? Not many.

Other types of realistic literature are thriving. There are growing stocks of fiction about nontraditional families and about the different ethnic groups that make up this country. There are excellent history books about American industrial workers and their movements. But with very few exceptions, that's as close as authors of books for young people have come to portraying working life in America.

The recommendations on this page reflect these strengths and limitations. We've gathered a list of books students love—books that are favorites in Association members' classrooms and libraries.

For their many suggestions, we thank librarian Mary Henry of Seattle's South Shore Middle School; librarian Sylvia LaCombe of the Bellows Falls (Vt.) Middle School; English teacher Sarah McCall of George LeyVa Junior High School in San Jose, Calif.; history teacher Lee Marsh of Weston (Mass.) High School; English teacher Winnie Vogt of the Bellows Falls (Vt.) Middle School; and kindergarten teacher Carolyn Webber of Belvedere Elementary School in Laurel, Md. Thanks, too, to Maria Salvadore of the Martin Luther King Library in Washington, D.C.

—Jane Power

Recommended Reading

Fiction—Grades K-5

A Chair for My Mother, by Vera Williams. Greenwillow, 1982. A small girl, her waitress mother, and her grandmother save their dimes to buy a chair. (In *Music, Music for Everyone*—Greenwillow, 1984—the same child gets an accordion.)

Gilberto and the Wind, by Marie Hall Ets. Viking, 1963. A small Hispanic boy plays with the wind.

The Hundred Penny Box, by Sharon Bell Mathis. Viking, 1975. An old woman tells her great grandnephew about some of her pennies, each of which represents a year of her life.

Jar of Dreams, by Yoshiko Uchida. Atheneum, 1981. The strength of a Japanese American family overcomes the obstacles, including prejudice, that they meet during the Depression.

Meet Ramona Quimby (Dell, 1983) and other Ramona stories, by Beverly Cleary. These humorous stories concern believable children and their experiences with school, family, and friends. Ramona's mother works part time in a doctor's office and her father holds a series of jobs—working in the office of a storage company, checking out groceries—and once is unemployed.

Miss Nelson Is Missing, by Harry Allard. Houghton Mifflin, 1977. A class of unruly children bedevil their teacher, Miss Nelson, until she disappears—but her replacement is Miss Viola Swamp, who treats them so severely that they're glad to have Miss Nelson back again.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, by Mildred Taylor. Dial, 1976. A landowning Black family in Mississippi during the Depression confront their area and era, in which Blacks aren't supposed to own land. This book is recommended for the upper grades as well.

The Snowy Day, by Ezra Jack Keats. Viking, 1962. Peter goes out and plays in the snow; when he comes in, his mother gives him a hot bath and puts him to bed. A simple story that won the Caldecott prize in 1963. (In *Peter's Chair*—Harper, 1967—Peter gets a baby sister.)

Fiction—Grade 6 Up

Blue Willow, by Doris Gates. Viking, 1940; Penguin, 1976. A migrant family's only material treasure is a blue willow plate.

Child of the Owl, by Lawrence Yep. Harper, 1977. When her father is arrested, a young Chinese American girl is sent to live with her grandmother in San Francisco and has trouble accepting the Chineseness of Chinatown.

Edith Jackson, by Rosa Guy. Viking, 1978; Bantam, 1981. A Black teenager grows up poor in New York. (Guy's *The Friends*—Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973; Bantam, 1983—describes how a well-to-do Jamaican girl comes to need Edith's friendship.)

The Great Gilly Hopkins, by Katherine Paterson. Crowell, 1978. Gilly is placed in a foster home against her will but learns to love and respect the people with whom she lives.

Homecoming (Atheneum, 1981) and *Dicey's Song* (Atheneum, 1982), by Cynthia Voigt. A quartet of abandoned children travel on foot down the East Coast to find the grandmother they hope will provide for them. (Voigt's *A Solitary Blue*—Atheneum, 1983—about a boy Dicey meets in school features one of the most appealing fathers in recent children's writing.)

The Lilith Summer, by Hadley Irwin. Feminist Press, 1979. A 12-year-old girl and an old lady babysit one another because the mother of one and the daughter of the other think each has to be watched. Once the two get used to one another's ways, they form a strong friendship.

One Proud Summer, by Marcia Hewitt and Claire Mackay. Women's Educational Press (280 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1W1, Canada). Hardship forces Lucie Laplante, 13, to leave school and work in the textile mills just in time to take up the responsibilities of union membership during the historic 1946 textile strike.

Soup (Knopf, 1974; Dell, 1979) and sequels, by Robert Newton Peck. In these stories of Vermont village life during the 1930s, two youngsters get in and out of trouble and encounter a host of real Vermonters.

Taking Care of Terrific, by Lois Lowery. Houghton, 1983. When a 14-year-old girl takes the four-year-old son of working parents to the Boston Public Garden, they meet some interesting characters.

Tough Tiffany, by Belinda Hurmence. Doubleday, 1980. Tiffany, a resourceful and resilient middle child, finally gets a bed of her own—but before long it's in danger of being repossessed.

Up a Road Slowly, by Irene Hunt. Modern Curriculum, 1966. This Newbery Award winner is a quiet, powerful story of a girl sent to live with her unmarried aunt and uncle and attend the one-room school where her aunt teaches.

Where the Red Fern Grows, by Wilson Rawls. Bantam, 1974. A boy growing up in a strong, supportive Ozark family earns the money to buy two "redbone" hunting hounds.

Nonfiction

Bread and Roses: The Struggle of American Labor, 1865-1911, by Milton Meltzer. New American Library, 1977. Grade 7 and up.

Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? by Milton Meltzer. New American Library, 1978. Grade 7.

Mill Child, by Ruth Holland. Macmillan, 1970. Grade 5 and above.

Mommies at Work, by Eve Merriam. Scholastic Book Services, 1955, 1974. Primary grades.

Strike Makers and Strike Breakers, by Sidney Lens. E. P. Dutton, 1985. Grade 7 and up. □

Mark Hinojosa

THE HIGH PRICE . . .

Farm Bankruptcies and Factory

Families Look to Schools for Help

When a community is in trouble, its schools are in trouble too.

The steel towns of western Pennsylvania are nearly 1,000 miles—and a world apart—from the fertile fields of southwest Iowa. But Americans living in these very different settings share a painful dilemma: at a time when much of the nation is enjoying prosperity, they remain in severe economic distress.

The Farm Belt, stretching from Indiana northwest to Washington State, southeast to Georgia, and southwest to New Mexico, is going through the worst times since the Great Depression.

The farm boom of the 1970s inflated land values and left farmers with heavy debts in the '80s. Encouraged to expand by mortgaging what they already owned to buy more land, small family farmers now find themselves caught by rising surpluses, declining prices, decreasing exports, and falling land values.

Last year 200,000 farmers were forced off their land. Over a third of the nation's farmers are in serious financial trouble, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports.

Less widely recognized is the continuing crisis of what used to be our country's basic industries. After nearly four years of economic recovery for the nation as a whole, the so-called Rust Belt—the area stretching from Pennsylvania through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois into Michigan—still suffers from a recession rivaling the 1930s. In Pittsburgh's steel-producing region, 700,000 workers have lost their jobs in recent years.

Greta Pratt

"Students are under a lot of stress," says Windom , Minn., agriculture teacher Gene Fredrikson. "I have one student who's holding his family's farm together. The father's essentially had a breakdown. The boy stops by to talk with me every few weeks—just to share things with an adult."

Hard times mean people have less money to spend. Local businesses fail, tax revenues fall, services decline, and populations shrink. Once thriving communities become virtual ghost towns.

The schools have always served as a focal point for these industrial and farm communities. Education is all the more vital at a time when young people can no longer count on a job in the mill or on the family farm. But when communities are in economic decline, their public schools lose funding.

Throughout the Farm and Rust Belts, NEA members are struggling to expand students' horizons, to equip them with new skills that only schools can teach.

Monessen, Pa., in the heart of the Rust Belt, is built on a hill rising abruptly from the Monongahela River, 150 miles south of Pittsburgh. The sprawling Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel mill, stretching five miles along the riverbank, still dominates the town above. In the early 1970s, the mill employed 5,500. Today, when it's not shut down, it employs about 650.

Monessen's population is steadily declining—as is enrollment in its schools, which has dropped from 2,100 in 1976 to 1,100 today. Almost half the students qualify for a free lunch.

"It's painful to see your hometown being destroyed little by little," says second grade teacher Cindy Chelen, president of the Monessen Education Association (MEA). "People have strong roots in this community. They don't want to leave, but there just aren't jobs here anymore."

Association member Dianne Vernet, who teaches fifth and sixth grade math, has watched the changes in her students over 20 years of teaching in Monessen. "This used to be a community of stable homes and families," she recalls. "But now many fathers are forced to leave during the week to work elsewhere and are only home on weekends. Other families don't have anyone working.

"Many parents are at their wits' end," Vernet says, "and it's reflected in the children—they're neglected, no longer well supervised—even abused.

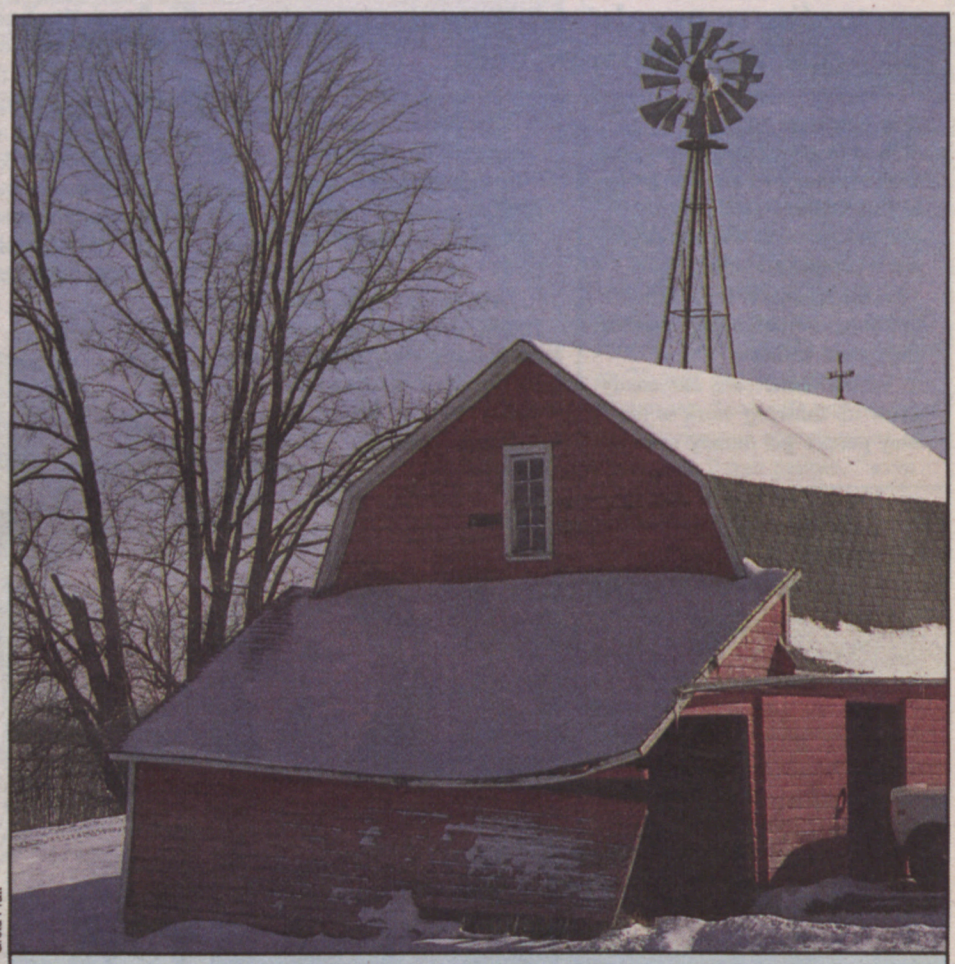
"You see it in the classroom. Students are more easily frustrated and act out more. You have to be sensitive to what they're going through—extend your patience to compensate for the lack of theirs."

Monessen Education Association members continually strive to meet student needs arising from the economic crisis. Philip Davis expanded his elementary school counseling program to include group sessions for parents and instituted a clothing "store" for needy students. Students in Carol Burrows' high school sewing classes make outfits for elementary children, using fabrics donated by the community. The staff, students, and PTA undertake special projects to help families in need.

The school administration notes with pride that no high school programs have been cut, despite cuts in staff. Monessen High School principal Fred Usher reports that "despite declining enrollment, we've retained our advanced classes—and added a computer program."

But what that means, he explains, is that teachers have more preparations. "We have teachers with four preps, and others teaching combined classes. That's not right, but we can't figure how else to do it. And our kids really want these advanced classes. We've seen an increased interest in academics. I think kids realize they've got to make a future for themselves, because the steel mill just isn't going to be here."

Maintaining academic offerings with a smaller staff has taken its toll on Association members. "It's been hard," MEA President Chelen says. "But people here



Greta Pratt

Scarecrow on a wooden cross Blackbird on the barn
Four hundred empty acres that used to be my farm
I grew up like my daddy did My grandpa cleared this land
When I was five I walked the fence while grandpa held my hand

Well there's ninety-seven crosses planted in the courthouse yard
Ninety-seven families who lost ninety-seven farms
I think about my grandpa and my neighbors and my name
And some nights I feel like dyin' Like that scarecrow in the rain

Rain on the scarecrow Blood on the plow
This land fed a nation This land made me proud
And Son I'm just sorry there's no legacy for you now

Rain on the Scarecrow (John Cougar Mellencamp/George M. Green)

Harry St. John

"I hate to see this happen to Iowa. I love this state.

Farms that have been in the same family for three generations are going under. The town square's just folding up. There are no jobs. People are unemployed, on welfare. They're under enormous stress. Children are frightened. Teenagers who grew up planning to take over the family farm are full of anger and resentment.

There's something very special about family farms and their communities. Extended families are close, people are close. This is an important part of America—one we can't afford to lose.

And rural communities can't afford to lose their schools—they're central. There's a terrible dynamic operating here. When communities go into economic decline, their schools go down as well—at the very time young people, and the entire community, need them most."

—Marlene Kennon, coordinator of special education, Villisca, Iowa

. . . OF HARD TIMES

Closures Threaten a Way of Life

don't want our kids to lose."

Teacher salaries in Monessen now rank 15th among the 17 school districts in Westmoreland County. "We're losing some good teachers to surrounding districts where they can earn considerably more," says Chelen.

Staff salaries are also an issue in Pontiac, Mich., a city 25 miles northwest of Detroit that's dependent on its General Motors plants.

"All school employees took wage freezes in the early '80s, when GM was way down," says Bonnie McRath, president of the Pontiac Educational Secretaries Association. "The economy's improved, but we've never come back."

"We can't compete with neighboring districts for teachers," adds Pontiac Education Association President Lora Perkins. "Our salaries are low, our school buildings old, and we just don't have money for materials or programs."

Counseling, library, music, art, and physical education programs were cut in the early 1980s. Some have recently been reinstated, but at minimal levels.

"Our junior and senior high students have only five classes," says Perkins. "The district talks about reinstituting the sixth period—if we're willing to teach it with no salary increase.

"Class size has gone way up—the maximum now ranges from 36 in the high school to 31 for the primary grades. What we're faced with is more kids and fewer resources."

Realizing that education in rural areas was at risk, the Minnesota Education Association formed a Task Force on Farm Coalitions a year ago. The Task Force works with farm organizations to develop a common approach to the crisis and to inform nonrural Minnesotans of its impact on people and schools.

"We're concerned with declining education funding," says MEA Vice-President Walt Munstermann, who chairs the Task Force, "and with the reluctance of many rural school boards to provide decent teacher salary increases. People sometimes need to be reminded that the schools are a vital resource, for their children and the community.

"We're equally concerned with the stress on people in rural areas," Munstermann adds. "School staffs can do a lot to help students, and parents, cope."

MEA members in Windom, a community in Minnesota's southwest corner, are confronted daily with the farm crisis—they see the stress in their students and feel it in their own lives. Bob Lindaman has taught English at Windom High School for 23 years and lives on a small farm nearby.

"We're going to lose our farm," he says, "and the new house we built on it several years ago. I've already had some equipment repossessed and had to sell some of my cattle and land. Even with my wife's and my teaching salaries, there's simply no way we can keep the farm.

"Very few of my high school seniors plan to stay in the Windom area after they graduate," Lindaman adds. "The country is losing its family farms—and a way of life is being lost as well."

Wanda Turner, who's taught elementary school in Windom for 20 years, considers herself and her husband lucky. "We bought our land in the 1950s, so our farm is paid for," she explains. "Our neighbors mortgaged their farm to borrow money to buy land for their children. Now they're in danger of losing everything.

"There's genuine hurt out here," says Turner. "Farmers are caught in an economic squeeze beyond their control."

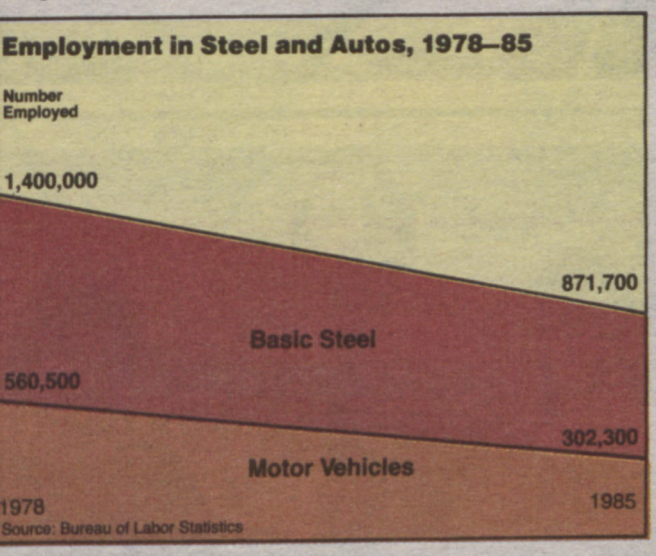
Windom's story is a familiar one. Foreclosure notices, a rarity three years ago, now take two pages in each issue of the weekly newspaper. Businesses are failing. School enrollment is declining.

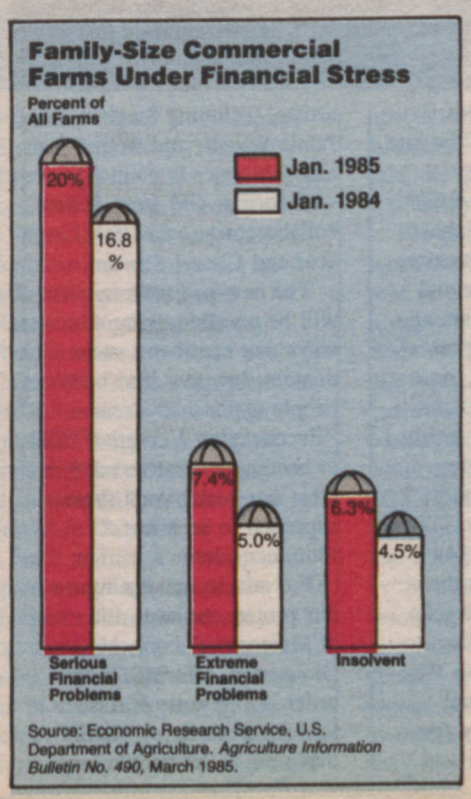
Windom High School counselor Lloyd Styrwoll sees the stress students are under. Families are separating. Child abuse is increasing, as are school behavior problems. And it's not uncommon to find students who don't have enough food to eat or clothing to stay warm.

"At a time like this," says Styrwoll, "the community really needs good schools. The kids seem to realize this. They understand they can't count on taking over the family farm—or if they do, they'll have to be as sophisticated in business as they are at farming. They know they'll need a good education in order to succeed.

"Unfortunately," he adds, "a lot of adults don't understand this—and schools suffer. Farm communities need help, and an important part of that help is funds to continue providing young people a quality education. The schools are the best hope of the students, their parents, and this community."

—Heidi Steffens





Terry L. Clark

Now Main Street's whitewashed windows and vacant stores
seems like there ain't nobody wants to come down
here no more
They're closing down the textile mill across
the railroad tracks
Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain't
coming back to your hometown

My Hometown (Bruce Springsteen)

Terry L. Clark

"Downtown Aliquippa is like a ghost town. There's nothing left. You used to have to make sure never to try to drive anywhere when the shifts were changing. Now it doesn't matter—there's no traffic anywhere. It's depressing.

The mill used to employ up to 12,000 people. Now there are about 500 working there. My husband's been out of work for three years. He's looked everywhere. There just aren't any jobs. His unemployment benefits have run out, so he's a nonperson as far as the government is concerned. He's not unemployed—he doesn't exist.

School enrollment is less than half what it once was. The budget's been cut way back. Class size is up. We can't order new texts or materials. Sixteen of the 20 kids in my homeroom are on free lunch.

The economic decline has taken an enormous toll on the community—especially the kids. My students feel helpless, as if they can't get anywhere no matter what they do. They've just given up. Seeing that hurts worse than anything. You start to feel you're a failure as a teacher."

—Joanne Alaica, English teacher, Aliquippa, Pa.

People

John Sunderland/PHOTOSTAFF, Inc.

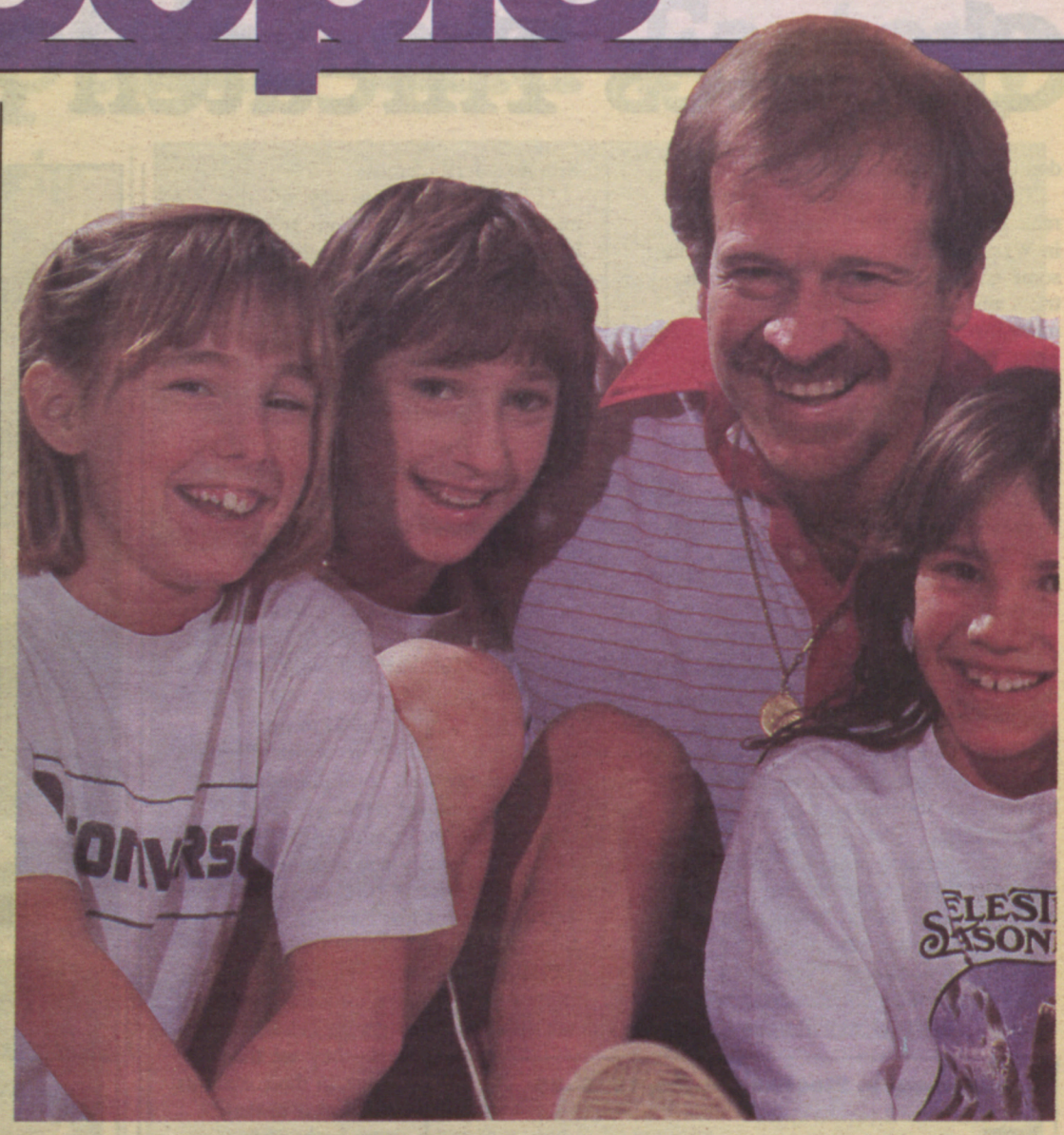
In the 11 years since Colorado physical education teacher **Richard Cendali** founded *Skip Its*, the team's members have hopped, jumped, and flipped their way through scores of performances, competitions, and workshops in 47 states and more than a dozen countries.

Association member Cendali, who teaches at Boulder's Douglass Elementary School, describes the program's rationale this way: "Rope skipping instills self-confidence; we never say 'I can't,' always 'I'll try.'"

"Also, the kids teach one another," he explains. "So they do tricks that appear difficult for their age because they just assume they can do them. Of the 1,200 tricks in the *Skip Its* repertoire, 900 are ones the kids taught me!"

The *Skip Its* company currently has some 150 members, many of them Cendali's former students, who rotate into 8-to-10-person traveling teams.

Skip Its members are required to maintain good grades. Once Cendali checked and found their grades had gone up 20 percent since the students joined the group.



H. Ed McKeever

At 4 p.m. every weekday, chemistry teacher **Var Lynn Peacock** changes from Mr. Peacock to Judge Peacock. From 4 until 7 p.m. Peacock serves as a part-time justice of the peace in the small central Utah town of Castle Dale. He collects fines, sets bail, even holds preliminary hearings for alleged felons.

He also marries people. "The two most memorable weddings I've performed," Peacock recalls, "took place hundreds of feet above the ground. One was on a suspension bridge, the other on a construction platform part way up a new 600-foot smokestack."

Usually, though, Peacock handles weddings—and misdemeanors—in his own living room. The county lets him use a courtroom when a suspect in a felony case—for example, a murder—chooses not to plead guilty.

Do his students at Emery County High School ever come before him? "All the time," Peacock says. "Usually for driving too fast."

Gordon Chibroski

Color-the-whale sketches, inspirational musings of the late E. B. White, and whimsy galore made publishing *A Gift from Maine* an unforgettable experience for New Gloucester teacher **James Plummer** and his sixth graders two years ago.

Now with a $2,000 grant from the state of Maine, Association member Plummer is seeking to duplicate that heady rush of creative exploration with his current sixth grade class.

A Gift from Maine, a 149-page paperback that was the state's bestseller for 16 weeks in 1984, will be "a hard act to follow," Plummer admits. The anthology featured original writings and drawings by famous Maine-based authors and artists, including Stephen King, Jamie Wyeth, and Robert Indiana. Plummer is pictured here with former *Gift from Maine* collaborators (*left*) Leah Levasseur and Cheryl Slocum.

The new project's emphasis will be on uncovering concrete ways that creatively successful doctors, lawyers, and business people apply their dreams. "Encouraging a creative child to become a creative adult is what our educational system is supposed to be about," Plummer notes.

For advice on starting a similar project, write to Plummer at Memorial School, New Gloucester, ME 04260. To order *A Gift from Maine*, enclose a check for $10.95 made out to James Plummer.

Carolyn Salisbury

What do Susan B. Anthony, Eleanor Roosevelt, Harriet Tubman, Sally Ride, and Mary Lou Retton have in common?

They're all women whose contributions to America have won them a place in the National Women's History Week parade conducted by California Association member **Milli-Ann Iuso-Cox's** fifth graders. The parade has become an early March tradition at Joaquin Miller Elementary School in Oakland.

Each of Iuso-Cox's students—male and female—chooses a famous woman to represent, complete with costume. The whole school turns out to watch the parade, participate in the women's history assembly that follows, share the special "biographical cakes" Iuso-Cox's students make, and take the annual "herstory quiz" written by the class.

The parade isn't the only work the 32-year teaching veteran is doing to bring women's history to Oakland elementary students. Iuso-Cox arranged for sabbatical leave last fall to visit historical sites around the country and collect materials on women's history. Working with 12 other Oakland teachers, she plans to develop curriculum materials.

"So many teachers want resources on women's history," says Iuso-Cox. "I finally decided to take the time to put together materials that will be available to all Oakland teachers."

AMPIX Photography

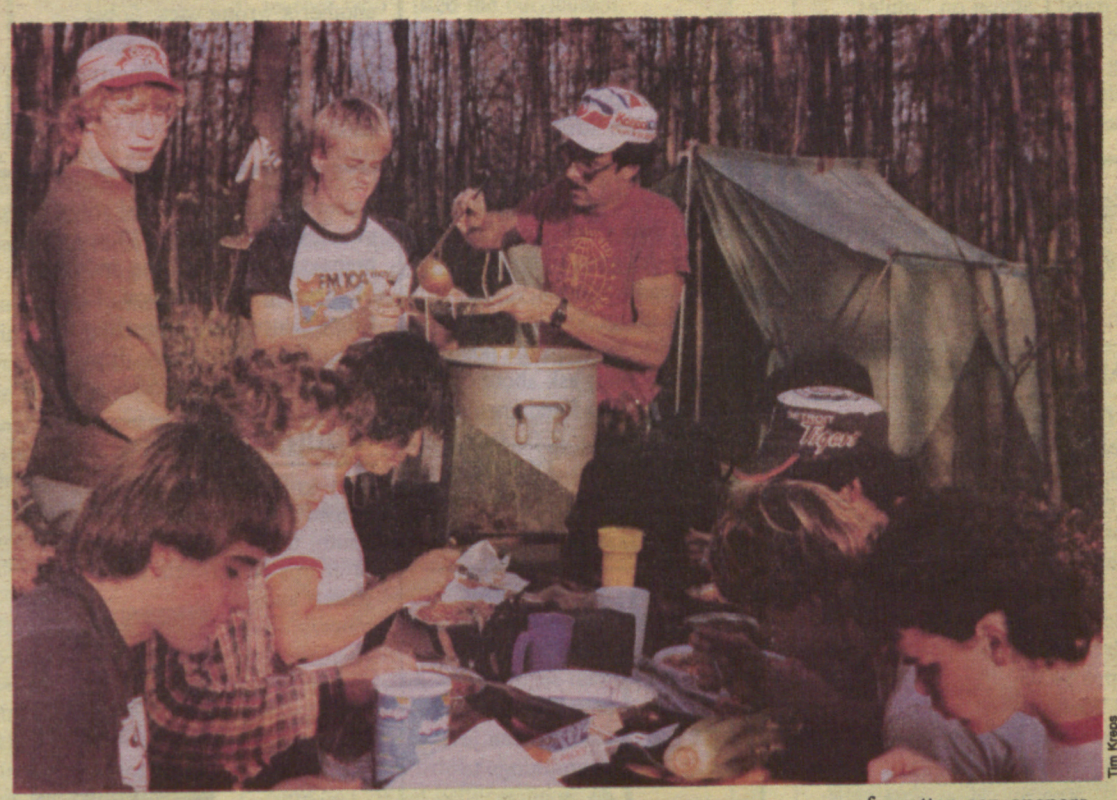
The drought, hunger, and poverty of East Africa are no longer distant abstractions to one North Carolina Association activist. Along with a physician, a farmer, and a crew from WRAL-TV in Raleigh, Durham English teacher **Eddie Davis** recently visited one of the world's poorest nations—Tanzania—for three weeks to see firsthand what it means to have an annual income of $270 per capita.

Davis—shown here with two of his Hillside High students and a Tanzanian woodcarving that depicts various villagers doing their chores—was chosen by the station from 600 teachers who applied to go.

The group's goal: to determine how North Carolinians can best help the people of Tanzania. The visit and its outcomes, including a plan to collect and distribute donated items, are the subject of a WRAL documentary.

"I spoke with teachers and learned they need just about everything in the way of supplies," Davis says. "The typical school has chalkboards and chalk, but little more. Yet the children have a strong desire to learn. They walk long distances—sometimes five or six miles—to school, often on empty stomachs."

Now Davis is helping American and Tanzanian students understand each other better through continuing correspondence. During his visit, he distributed some 600 letters from students throughout central North Carolina to sixth graders in the Shinyanga region. Already, 75 of them have written back.



Tim Kreps

History teacher Tim Kreps believes students learn best from experience. So the 11th and 12th graders in his Northwest Ohio history class at Southview High School in Sylvania, Ohio, experience firsthand something close to the lifestyle of the state's pioneers.

Each semester for the past eight years the class has camped out overnight at a Boy Scout camp 60 miles away.

"In frontier days, survival was a goal of both settlers and natives," Kreps explains. "The better individuals were at problem solving, the better their chance to survive."

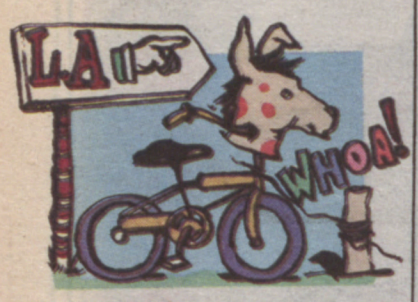
His students work on problem solving of their own before the trip by forming committees to provide the necessary food, equipment, recreation, and transportation. Sometimes Kreps notices students making errors during the planning stage but says nothing, knowing the mistakes will provide opportunities to solve problems at the campsite. Mishaps over the years have included overturned canoes, forgotten can openers, and uncooperative weather.

The latest group of "pioneers," Kreps reports, were amazed to find they "could have a good time without a TV or a tape recorder."

Kreps would like to share experiences and ideas with other teachers who've incorporated camping trips into their curriculums or are interested in doing so. Write to him at Southview High School, 7225 Sylvania Ave., Sylvania, OH 43560.

RESOURCES

Idea Exchange



A Trip Round The Curriculum

Each year Betty Bigney's two fourth grade classes at the Highland Street School in Du Bois, Pa., make a round trip to Los Angeles without ever leaving Du Bois—and learn in many subjects while they do it. Every day in physical education they run or walk a mile (six times around the school), then add up the distances they've all covered. Each child plots the mileage along the route marked on a U.S. road map.

The class talks about the geography and physical features of the states they travel through, and each student keeps a log. They tour the larger cities, such as New York and Philadelphia, and (at the local Y, after school) swim the Mississippi River. They've even ridden down into the Grand Canyon on "mules" made from bicycles—students bring in any spare bikes in their family, so there are mules for all.

Last year when the class arrived in Los Angeles, they headed for the local (Du Bois) airport, turned in their "tickets," and "flew home" sitting in a real plane without ever leaving the ground.

Bringing It All Home

Home support is important, notes fourth grade teacher Elaine Schneider of Lexington, Ky., so each week she tries to phone or write two children's families to tell them something good about their child. The practice is more than a nice idea, Schneider reminds us—it establishes a relationship that's especially valuable if a time comes for *bad* news.

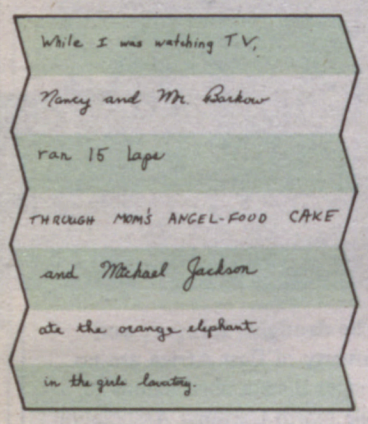
Clearly, it's important for Schneider to keep track of which families she's been in touch with and what happened. So she keeps a chart of whom she contacted and when, whether it was a letter, call, or conference, the topics covered, and general notes. Then when it's time to get in touch again, she can refer back to all the communications with that family throughout the year.

"The children see me mark the chart when I send a note home—and it helps the notes actually reach the parents," Schneider says. "And when a parent comes in, I have a record right at hand of every note I've sent, every phone call I've made."

Sentenced To Learn

Introductory adverbial clauses and other components of sophisticated sentence structure are no mystery to students who've passed through one of Suzanne Sobel's classes. The former teacher and Association member was teaching eighth grade at the American School in Mexico City when she developed her version of an old but good technique.

Sobel would seat students in a circle, each with a sheet of paper, then instruct them (with



examples if necessary) to write an introductory adverbial clause at the top, fold the paper over to hide it, and pass the paper to the person on the right. The process would be repeated with a compound subject, a past tense plural verb, a prepositional phrase, a conjunction and singular proper noun, a singular action verb, and another prepositional phrase.

Then students would read out the resulting sentences. Because they usually pointed out one another's wrong uses, Sobel didn't need to. Boys especially liked this game, she reports, and she could vary the recipe to suit class capabilities. □

TV/Radio Tips

Weekend Special, "Frank and Fearless"—*ABC-TV, Saturday, March 1, and Saturday, March 8, 12 noon-12:30 p.m. ET.* Two-part updated version of a Horatio Alger story about a courageous boy who overcomes great misfortune to emerge a hero.

Schoolbreak—*CBS-TV, Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m. ET. March 4:* "Hear Me Cry." Rebroadcast of story about a teenage suicide pact, which alerts parents to the warning signs. *March 18:* "Exchange Student." Rebroadcast of story about an exchange student from India and how she deals with America's social pressures and values.

Jerusalem: Within These Walls—*PBS, Wednesday, March 12, 8-9 p.m. ET.* "National Geographic Special" documents the lives of Muslim, Armenian, Christian, and Jewish people quartered in the walled Old City of Jeruselum, an area of less than one square mile. Write to National Geographic Specials, c/o Chevron, 742 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94710, for a free resource guide to the four 1986 specials.

Wild America—*PBS, Saturday, March 15; check local listings for times.* Documentary about past and present-day reptiles. Dinosaurs have disappeared, but their descendents thrive in almost every North American habitat.

The World's Largest Concert—*PBS, Learning (cable) channel, and National Public Radio, Tuesday, March 18, 12:30-1:30 p.m. ET.* A live, nationwide concert sponsored by the Music Educators National Conference highlights Music in Our Schools Month. Some 500,000 students, teachers, and parents in schools across the country will play and sing the same program simultaneously. The central concert, in Washington, D.C., will be led by the U.S. Air Force Band and Singing Sergeants. To participate, contact your local PBS or National Public Radio station. For further information, phone the Music Educators National Conference at 703/860-4000.

Pride of Place: Building the American Dream—*PBS, eight one-hour episodes starting Monday, March 24; check local listings for times.* Documentary about American architecture: its roots, what makes it unique, and how it reflects the nation's culture and aspirations.

Treasure Island—*Disney (cable) channel; check local listings for dates and times.* The 1950 Walt Disney movie of the classic by Robert Louis Stevenson.

NOVA, "Return of the Osprey"—*PBS, Tuesday, March 11, 8-9 p.m. ET.* A conservation success story: the fight to save a majestic species from extinction, and how that fight led to realization of the dangers of DDT. □

Free or Inexpensive

LEARNING PSYCHOLOGY

The Child's Conception of Time. Jean Piaget. One of the famous Swiss psychologist's most important studies of how children learn. 306 pp. $4.95 from booksellers; $5.45 (prepaid) from Ballantine Mail Sales, Dept. TA, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022.

CONSUMER EDUCATION

Your Guide for Teaching Money Management. Provides a framework for teaching personal finance to senior high and adult classes. 40 pp. $1. Money Management Institute, Household International, 2700 Sanders Rd., Prospect Heights, IL 60070.

READING

Choosing Good Books for Your Children; Upbeat and Offbeat Activities To Encourage Reading; TV and Reading; Reading Aloud to Your Children. Four brochures designed to help parents and teachers hook youngsters on reading. Single copies free (add 50¢ per title for postage and handling; ask about bulk rates). Reading Is Fundamental, Publications Dept., P.O. Box 23444, Washington, DC 20026.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Teacher Saver Memo Pad. A 100-page tablet with segmented pages where teachers can jot down things to do, such as "call," "send home," "make/laminate," and "organize/set up." $3.95 plus 10 percent for shipping ($1 minimum). I.S.S. Publications, 160 Washington, S.E., Suite 65-NE, Albuquerque, NM 87108.

MATHEMATICS/SCIENCE

Science and Mathematics for the Year 2000 and Beyond. R.K. James and V.R. Kurtz, editors. Presents essays about the future of science and math teaching, including an argument for "sciematics," the unified study of science and math. 122 pp. $6 prepaid. School Science and Mathematics Association, 126 Life Science Bldg., Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0256.

COUNSELING

Stay-in-School Book Covers. Aimed at Hispanic American youth, these textbook covers offer tips on efficient study, plus photos and biographies of Hispanic American entertainers and athletes who've found education important to their careers.

Set of 40 covers (10 each on Edward James Olmos, Angela Bofill, Tracee Talavera, Roberto Clemente), $6 prepaid by check to McDonald's Corp. Customer Relations, McDonald's Plaza, 2nd floor, Oak Brook, IL 60521.

SCIENCE

Edmund Scientifics. A series of eight kits with everything you need to perform simple experiments: ***Magnets***, K1001, $3.49; ***Prism***, K1002, $3.49; ***Mirrors***, K1003, $2.79; ***Weather***, K1004, $4.49; ***Illusions***, K1005, $2.79; ***Color***, K1006, $2.79; ***Bi-Metal Discs***, K1007, $2.79; ***Science Oddities***, K1008, $2.95. Add $2.50 per order for postage and handling. Edmund Scientific Co., 101 E. Gloucester Pike, Barrington, NJ 08007.

DISCIPLINE

Parents and Teachers as Discipline Shapers. Kevin J. Swick. Describes seven ways teachers can involve parents in student discipline. 32 pp. Stock no. 1694-7-10-D. $5.95. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

LIBRARY USE

Unlocking the Secrets of Research. Anita Meyer Meinbach and Liz Christman Rothlein. Presents reproducible exercises for teaching students in grades 5-8 how to use such reference books as atlases, the *World Almanac*, and *Bartlett's Book of Familiar Quotations*. 113 pp. $9.95 from school supply stores or by mail from Good Year Books, Scott Foresman and Co., 1900 East Lake Ave., Glenview, IL 60025.

MUSIC/HISTORY

Carry It On! A History in Song and Picture of the Working Men and Women of America. Folk singer Pete Seeger and writer/labor historian Bob Reiser. Includes 84 songs, 130 historical and contemporary photographs, and dozens of anecdotes, quotes, and pieces of labor history. $10.95 in bookstores. Bulk rates per copy are $9.29 for 10-49 books; $7.78 for 50-99; $5.80 for 100 or more. Special Sales, Simon and Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Forgotten Factor in School Success: The Family; A Policymaker's Guide. Dorothy Rich. Discusses strategies schools can use to help every family become a system for teaching and learning—complementing the work of the school. 72 pp. $5. Home and School Institute, Special Projects Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. □

INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING ABOUT APARTHEID

by BILL BIGELOW

Jill A. Cannefax

When they grasp the situation in South Africa, students learn more than foreign affairs. Often a greater sense of responsibility and initiative come in the same package.

Steve Tuttle

"Revolt!" comes a cry from the excited crowd. "We can't take this any more!" But the response is ready: "You're banished! . . . Leave the classroom!"

The voice of authority is that of another teenager. The heated exchange takes place during the opening lesson of a social studies unit I've developed on South Africa.

In this lesson, I put about one-sixth of the students into one group and the rest in another. Those in the small group are generously supplied with M & M candies, symbolic of income, and roam freely around the room. The others are pressed together in tiny rectangles drawn on the floor in scattered locations. They're given no M & M's, but favored individuals can earn some by serving the minority—maybe lifting, moving, or cleaning classroom objects, maybe keeping their counterparts in the rectangles.

During the 20 or 30 minutes of the simulation, my students experience classroom doses of power, poverty, and exploitation. They're startled to discover that in a real country, somewhere, more than 70 percent of the population is forced to squeeze onto bits of undesirable land amounting to only 13 percent of the total, while a tiny minority freely roams the remaining 87 percent of the land and bosses everybody else.

Afterwards, students waste no time in demanding why this 70 percent doesn't get its act together and overthrow the minority.

"I'd just get a gun and kill 'em" is a common refrain. But in later activities and discussions, the students learn that maybe it's not that simple.

I began developing curriculum on South Africa when, as a first-year teacher in 1978, I discovered that my school's tenth grade social studies text devoted exactly one paragraph to apartheid. Later I found that most texts that do cover South Africa paint a remarkably distorted portrait.

For example, one widely used social studies text explains to students that in South Africa "Africans live in special suburbs or townships, 15 to 30 kilometers from town. They must commute to work on crowded trains and buses. They must be careful not to forget their passes. These passes show that they are allowed to work in the cities."

Students filtering these sanitized lines through their own experiences might picture South Africans living in "special suburbs" like California's Marin County or New York's Westchester, with swimming pools and well-tended lawns but the minor inconvenience of a long commute. And the passes? Like the students' familiar bus passes, no doubt.

To confront my classes with the real conditions and struggles of South Africans, I developed role plays and located excerpts from novels and speeches. I found stories of pass raids, of growing up in "Coloured" ghettos, of tense friendships between whites and blacks, and of students deciding to rebel against humiliating treatment from racist teachers.

Students respond from the heart. "I just couldn't believe there is really such a place in the world. How can people treat each other like that?" wrote one tenth grader.

"It really opens their eyes to injustice," says a Maryland teacher who's used the curriculum. "Once they've studied South Africa, the world doesn't look the same anymore."

Although I've worried that their new learning might make students lose hope, this hasn't happened. Far from finding despair in the South African conflicts, many find inspiration. When a lesson calls on students to write letters about the situation, some pose searching questions to corporations or government officials, and others fire off letters of outrage.

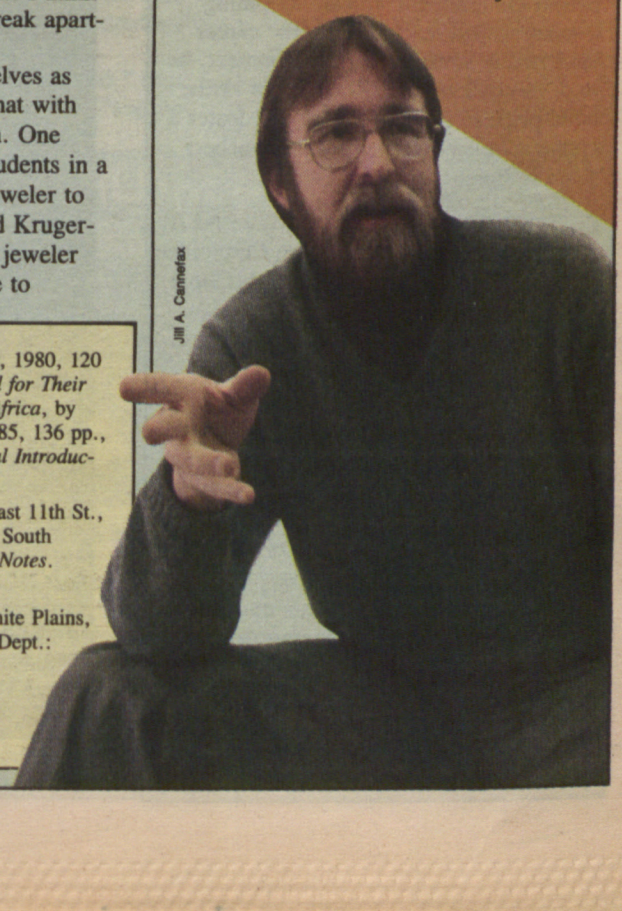
One girl wrote black leader Winnie Mandela: "I'm happy for you because you're not afraid of the whites. You do what you want, when you want. I think that's great. I hope you can break apartheid down."

Students learn to see themselves as makers of change, to realize that with understanding can come action. One year, at the end of the unit, students in a Boston suburb asked a local jeweler to stop selling South African gold Krugerrands. After a brief delay, the jeweler complied. What better antidote to despair than the feeling of making a difference?

But South Africa's apartheid system is easily mistaught. When I began teaching about it, self-righteousness crept into my lessons ("They're racist, we're not"). When I caught myself, I tried to get students thinking about injustice in both South Africa and the United States. We compared conditions in South Africa to our own situation in Oregon. We asked why the unemployment rate is twice as high for black U.S. teenagers as white. When we discussed who benefits and suffers from racism in South Africa, we aimed that same question at our own society.

Despite the false starts, I've discovered there is nothing I teach that generates more student interest, even excitement, than South Africa. Years afterward, students still return to tell me that what they remember most about my social studies class was South Africa. And it's not just because that country is in the news. More likely it's because what is going on in South Africa touches the whole student: both heart and intellect. □

Association member Bill Bigelow teaches social studies at Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon. In 1981 he visited southern Africa to interview South Africans in exile as part of the research for his curriculum. He would like to hear from elementary and secondary teachers across the country who are teaching about South Africa in any subject area.



Jill A. Cannefax

Reading About Apartheid

Africa World Press, P.O. Box 1892, Trenton, NJ 08608: *Strangers in Their Own Country, A Curriculum Guide on South Africa*, by William Bigelow. 1985, 92 pp., $14.95.

Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023: "The Depiction of South Africa in U.S. Textbooks" (1984) and "South Africa: Educating for Inequality" (1985). Special issues of the *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*. Each 38 pp. and $3.95, plus $1 for handling.

International Defense and Aid Fund, P.O. Box 17, Cambridge, MA 02138: *Apartheid: The Facts*, 1983, 112 pp., $6.70; *Children Under Apartheid, in Photographs and Text*, 1980, 120 pp., $5.70; *For Their Triumphs and for Their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa*, by Hilda Bernstein, revised edition, 1985, 136 pp., $7.70; *This Is Apartheid: A Pictorial Introduction*, 1984, 40 pp., $1.70.

Labor Research Association, 80 East 11th St., New York, NY 10003: "Labor and South Africa." Special issue of *Economic Notes*. 1985, 20 pp., $2.00.

Longman, Inc., 95 Church St., White Plains, NY 10601, attn. School Marketing Dept.: *Journey to Jo'Burg*, by Beverley Naidoo. 1985, 79 pp., $2.95 (suitable for middle school and older students).

Your NEA

MAKING NEWS

Winner of the Labor Research Association's 10th annual award for outstanding union leadership was none other than NEA President **Mary Hatwood Futrell**. . .

With the increasing focus on shaping the education reform agenda at the state level, NEA leaders believe it's vital for the Association to work with the nation's governors as they plan their initiatives for the next phase of the reform push. So NEA spokespersons testified this winter before several task forces of the National Governors' Association. President **Mary Hatwood Futrell** appeared before the task forces on teaching and parental involvement and choice; Vice-President **Keith Geiger** before the readiness-to-learn task force; Secretary-Treasurer **Roxanne Bradshaw** before the college quality task force; NEA Executive Director **Don Cameron** before the school leadership and management task force; Assistant Executive Director **Gary Watts** before the technology task force; and Assistant Executive Director **Ruby King-Williams** before a governors' panel on school facilities. . .

Roxanne Bradshaw

Keith Geiger

Keith Geiger also spoke on career development at a national education conference cosponsored by the University of Miami and the Dade County (Fla.) Public Schools. Geiger contrasted quick-fix quackery and genuine education reform, explaining that some "career ladder" plans are merely disguised merit pay gimmicks that establish unreasonable and bizarre standards of evaluation, set a quota for excellence, and poison the academic climate by pitting teacher against teacher. But true career ladders that stress career development, he said, increase teachers' classroom skills, build pride in the profession, and foster a cooperative environment where teachers share techniques with each other. . .

Bob Chase

Meanwhile, NEA Executive Committee member **Bob Chase** of Connecticut was addressing the school division of the Association of American Publishers on ways textbooks can help teachers meet the challenges of the next 15 years. He called for books designed to encourage students to think for themselves and develop their creativity. Texts must also accurately portray the changing nature of family life, address student problems like drug abuse and pregnancy, and reflect the contributions each ethnic group has made to the nation, Chase urged. □

REACHING OUT

First Deadline Nears For 'Operation Rescue'

NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) is now accepting applications for funding of grassroots Association efforts to prevent school dropouts. A total of $700,000 will be available through "Operation Rescue," in amounts up to $50,000 for two years.

Local Associations have until May 1 to apply for the first round of grants (for projects to begin this coming September) but may also apply later. Detailed guidelines on how to apply appeared in the January 27 issue of the *NEA NOW* leadership newsletter (see your local president for a copy.)

To augment the grants program, NFIE is holding a series of information exchange meetings this spring on dropout prevention.

Celebrate, Celebrate. . .

National Teacher Day will be observed on Tuesday, March 4, in most areas. It's a day to recognize, honor, and encourage America's teachers.

NEA mailed an "idea starter kit" to every local affiliate back in January, full of suggested Teacher Day community relations projects and activities, sample news releases and public service announcements, and camera-ready art.

Let's all work to make National Teacher Day a nationwide grassroots celebration of teaching and public education!

GED Seeks Item Writers

The General Educational Development (GED) Testing Service is once again recruiting teachers to write questions for its high school–level tests in writing skills, social studies, science, reading, and math. All 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces use the GED tests as a basis for awarding high school equivalency credentials.

Interested teachers should have at least a bachelor's degree, write effectively, be experienced in teaching at the secondary or adult level, and be able to follow precise instructions and complete assignments punctually. Each teacher selected will receive an honorarium.

If you think you qualify, write to Item Writing, GED Testing Service, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

File Now for NEA Office

The office of NEA secretary-treasurer and two seats on the Executive Committee will be filled through nominations and elections at the 1986 NEA Representative Assembly, July 3-6 in Louisville, Ky.

For complete information, including an official filing form, contact the Executive Office at NEA Center, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. The June *NEA Today* will carry the photo and candidate statement of anyone filing for office and submitting a statement by April 1. Submission of these forms does not constitute nomination for office.

In order to run, you must have been an NEA active or educational support member for the two years immediately preceding the election.

Student Poster Contest Offers $500 Top Prize

High school students can win up to $500 in a poster contest sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind. Entries should illustrate how persons who become visually impaired can continue to function in their jobs. Suggested themes: retraining, modification of the work environment, new equipment.

The competition is part of a public relations campaign to make people aware that visually impaired persons have many abilities. Entry deadline is May 1.

For more information contact Gerald Miller, National Consultant on Employment, American Foundation for the Blind, 15 W. 16th St., New York, NY 10011 (212/620-2037).

Attention, Procrastinators

April 15 is looming once again. If you've put off your annual struggle with the tax forms, it's not too late to order some tailor-made help.

The 1986 edition of the *NEA Federal Income Tax Guide for Education Employees* spells out the new tax laws concerning mileage deductions, charity work, medical expenses, and exemption changes for divorced couples. Its 168 pages offer helpful advice on hundreds of other tax questions of particular concern to teachers and school support staff.

To order, send $6.95 (tax-deductible!) to the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516; ask for stock no. 1442-1-00-D. Allow three to four weeks for delivery. If you need delivery guaranteed within two weeks, enclose an additional $2.

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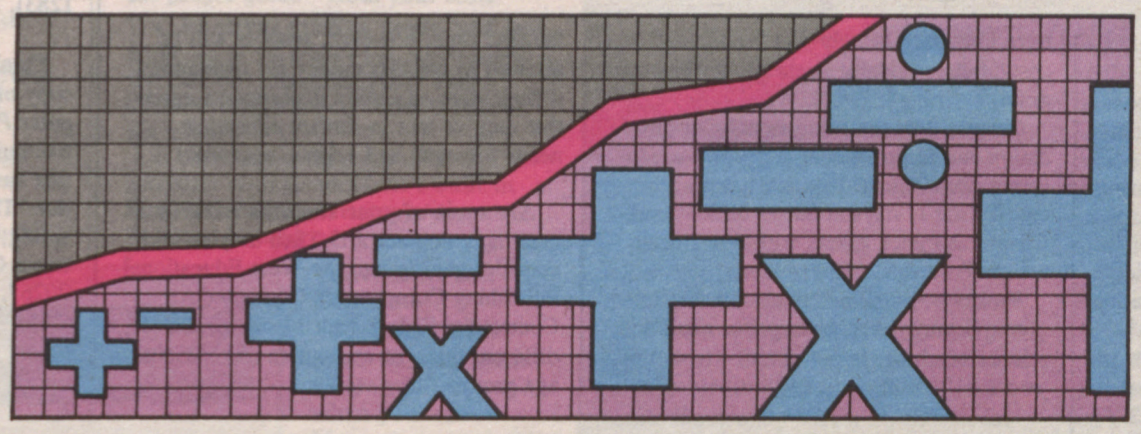
NZTP

New Zealand Tourist and Publicity. For information call 1 (800) 232-3344. After April 1, 1986 call (213) 477-8241. Or write: NZTP, Teachers, 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1530, LA, CA 90024.

RESEARCH CLUES

Working Together To Raise Math Achievement

by Robert McNergney and Martin Haberman



How should elementary mathematics instruction be organized to accommodate students of different abilities?

- By whole-class instruction?
- By ability grouping?
- By individualized instruction?

Two education researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore recently compared the effects of these three basic approaches on achievement in math and on attitudes toward math in two contrasting groups of students. One group included both black and white students in grades 4-6 in urban classrooms. The other group consisted of students in grades 3-5—most of them white—in rural classrooms.

For both groups of students, ability grouping and individualized instruction were substantially more effective than whole-class instruction in teaching computational skills. There were no differences on two other achievement measures: math concepts and math applications.

Individualized instruction—but not ability grouping—was significantly more effective in eliciting positive attitudes toward math in both groups of students.

Individualized instruction was also the teachers' first choice. At the end of the experiments, teachers were allowed, if they wished, to receive training in any method other than the one they had originally been trained in. All chose team-assisted individualization. None who had already been trained in it chose to switch to another method.

The "individualized instruction" approach used was actually "team-assisted individualization," in contrast to a totally individualized instructional plan. Under the team-assisted approach, students of differing abilities were grouped into "learning teams" of four or five. To each member of the team the teacher assigned self-instructional units (including self-administered tests) geared to the student's level and working pace. The team was responsible for checking work and managing activities. At the end of each week, students on teams that met certain criteria were rewarded with attractive certificates.

The method of ability grouping used a high and a low group and provided a different pace and set of materials for each group. Specifications included controlled practice (with teachers giving one or two problems and checking them in class), seatwork, homework, and an emphasis on active teaching: frequent questions, rapid teaching pace, and increased student time on task.

Teachers using whole-group instruction (the Missouri Mathematics Program)—like those using the ability-grouped model—employed controlled practice, seatwork, and homework. Teachers also asked frequent questions, kept the pace of instruction moving, and worked for increased student time on task. Unlike the ability-grouped model, however, this approach did not differentiate assignments for students' abilities.

Decades of previous research have found few positive results for homogeneous grouping or individualization—yet teachers intuitively believe both are useful tools. These latest research results at least partially vindicate the wisdom of teachers' intuition. When instruction is carefully planned to motivate and manage students, adapting it to individuals can be more effective than teaching all students the same way.

But be careful! These results do *not* justify *all* approaches to individualizing and ability grouping within classes. "Individualization" had a special meaning in this research, and the structuring of the instruction was very important.

One thing is clear. In these studies, students, teachers, and researchers all agreed that when children work together and respect each others' needs and abilities, they're likely to learn math—and to feel good about it.

There is more to this study than can be summarized here. If you'd like additional details, see "Effects of Whole Class, Ability Grouped, and Individualized Instruction on Mathematics Achievement," by Robert E. Slavin and Nancy L. Karweit, in the Fall 1985 *American Educational Research Journal* (vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 251-367). Both Slavin and Karweit are at Johns Hopkins University, 3505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

Robert McNergney is associate professor at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia; Martin Haberman is professor at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. They prepared this column for NEA Today *as part of the American Educational Research Association's Editor-at-Large Program, which promotes the continuing role of research in attaining educational excellence by developing materials to show the implications of research for improved practice.*

YOU AND YOUR RETIREMENT

Taxing Retirees Twice

There's an unpleasant surprise for school employees in the tax 'reform' package passed by the House of Representatives in December and now being considered in the Senate.

New language in the bill, if enacted into law, will result in an additional tax on employee-contributed retirement benefits. People retiring after July 1, 1986, who contributed to their own pensions—the current practice in 47 state retirement systems—will lose the grace period that now exempts their initial retirement benefits from taxes.

The result could be $2,000 to $4,000 in additional taxes for the average school employee upon retirement.

Under current tax law, the monthly benefits an employee receives from his or her retirement plan are exempt from federal tax for the first 30 months or until the benefits total the amount the employee has contributed over the years, whichever comes first.

The logic behind this 50-year-old provision is simple: the money employees contributed to their retirement plans was already taxed as income during the years it was earned. Taxing this money again when it comes back to the employee in retirement amounts to double taxation.

Uncertainty over whether or not the new provision will become law could disrupt the retirement plans of many school employees and drive some of the nation's most experienced veteran teachers to take early retirement as a way to beat the July 1 deadline.

"It's nothing more than double taxation resulting from poor representation," says NEA Retired President Joe Westbrook. "This is just one more example of why every school employee must be involved in protecting his or her retirement security."

Hardest hit by this proposed change in the tax laws would be school employees who have used popular 403(b) programs—tax-deferred annuities—to shelter income for retirement. Many newly retired employees have chosen to withdraw—and pay taxes on—their annuity contributions during the grace period when their monthly retirement checks are not considered taxable income, because they're then in a lower tax bracket.

The House-passed bill "would almost render those 403(b) plans useless," says Bruce Hineman, secretary-treasurer of the National Council on Teacher Retirement. "They'd lose their tax advantage. I just despise the government always changing the rules on people retiring."

"Despise" might be a soft word when applied to the reaction from many pre-retired members of NEA Retired.

"We're hopping mad," says NEA-R's Westbrook, "and we intend to let members of Congress know that it's a dumb idea to hurt retirees in an election year."

NEA Retired members are already gearing up for a legislative battle when the Senate begins debate on the tax plan. Through their newsletter, NEA Retired members have initiated a massive lobbying effort to alter the plan.

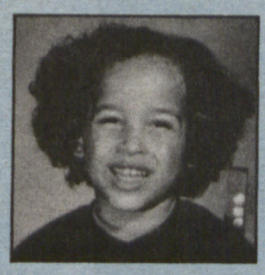
—Eddy Gattis

MISSING CHILDREN

The kids pictured here have disappeared from their homes. They've been reported to NEA by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a nonprofit organization funded through the U.S. Department of Justice.

If you think you've seen any of these youngsters in your school or elsewhere, please contact the Center immediately at **800/843-5678.**

Jessica Laura Watts
Born: 11/22/75.
Last seen: 5/9/82 in Allentown, Pa.
3'6", 35 lbs., brown eyes, light brown hair.



Jeremiah George Huger
Born: 12-10-80.
Last seen: 6-25-85 in the Bronx, N.Y., playing in his yard when a man grabbed him.
3'6", 45 lbs., brown eyes and hair.

Juanita (Lee) Estevez
Born: 6/3/69.
Last seen: 11/27/84 in Yuba City, Calif.
5'5", 135 lbs., brown eyes, brown hair, ears pierced many times.

TECH TALK

Hazards, Funding, and Artistic Creation

Computer-using teachers and school office employees alike sometimes wonder about the possible health hazards of using video display terminals (VDTs). Lots of research is being done in this area, and the consensus seems to be that VDTs don't *have* to cause eyestrain and backaches. When those problems arise, they usually indicate a poorly designed terminal or work station.

A VDT does emit some ionizing radiation (the kind of radiation that's known to be dangerous), but less than a hairdryer, for example, or an iron. VDT's, like TV sets, also emit low levels of nonionizing radiation.

Today's VDT's must comply with the Federal Communications Commission's radiation standards. That puts them well within the most conservative world safety standards. Now the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is planning a three-year study to determine whether female VDT users' worries about radiation-caused miscarriages are well-founded.

Meanwhile, the major VDT hazard seems to be *stress*. A VDT can monitor every keystroke, so managers can easily get a printout of each operator's day's work, establish production averages, and pay accordingly. No wonder one NIOSH study found that VDT operators have even higher stress levels than air traffic controllers!

The federal education budget for next school year keeps funding at the current levels for two major programs schools have long used to help foot technology costs, but drastically slashes a newer program.

Chapter 1 of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act (aid for educating disadvantaged students, formerly called Title I) stays at $3.69 billion, and Chapter 2 (block grants with few strings attached) stays at $532 million.

However, the 1984 Education for Economic Security Act, to improve math and science teaching, is cut in half—from this year's $100 million to $50 million. (For the first time, however, schools will be allowed to use this money for technology if their state education departments agree that they've met in-service education needs for math and science teachers.)

Are some of your students wizards at creating computer art? Then they should consider getting into the West Educational Publishing Company's "Computer Art Contest for Kids," with 11 categories for different types of computers and various age groups.

Deadline for entering is May 1. For further information, phone 1-800-523-WEST (in California, phone 415-969-1283).

Finally, don't forget to order your copy of the 1986 *Yellow Book of Computer Products for Education*, a descriptive guide to teacher-tested software items that have won NEA Teacher Certification. The new edition, due out in early spring, costs $15. Write to NEA Educational Computer Service (ECS), P.O. Box 70267, Washington, DC 20088.

—NEA Educational Computer Service

Curriculum Clearinghouse

*This is the first of a series of ideas NEA members around the country have sent in on integrating the computer into the curriculum.**

Course: Computer Art Graphics I
Submitted by: James A. Franchina, art teacher, Spring Valley Senior High School, Route 59, Spring Valley, NY 10977

Target Group: Secondary art students
Objective: Introduce the use of the computer as an artistic tool.

Students in this introductory course work with a variety of graphics software packages and a list of reference materials. They investigate high- and low-resolution graphics. They learn to create graphic displays from line drawings and geometrics, examine animation methods, and draw, color, and paint graphic designs. They explore in depth the use of graphic tablets and light pens. They examine over 20 career opportunities in computer art graphics.

Students who complete the first course can take Computer Art Graphics II to get more experience and begin developing an individual style.

*The Computer Curriculum Clearinghouse will be a featured section in the 1986 *Yellow Book of Computer Products for Education*, as well as a regular part of *NEA Today*. To share your curriculum ideas with colleagues, send a brief description of your program, whom it's meant for, your objectives, and the equipment you use, along with your name, school, address, and a phone number where you can be reached during the day, to Computer Curriculum Clearinghouse, c/o NEA Educational Computer Service, P.O. Box 70267, Washington, DC 20088.

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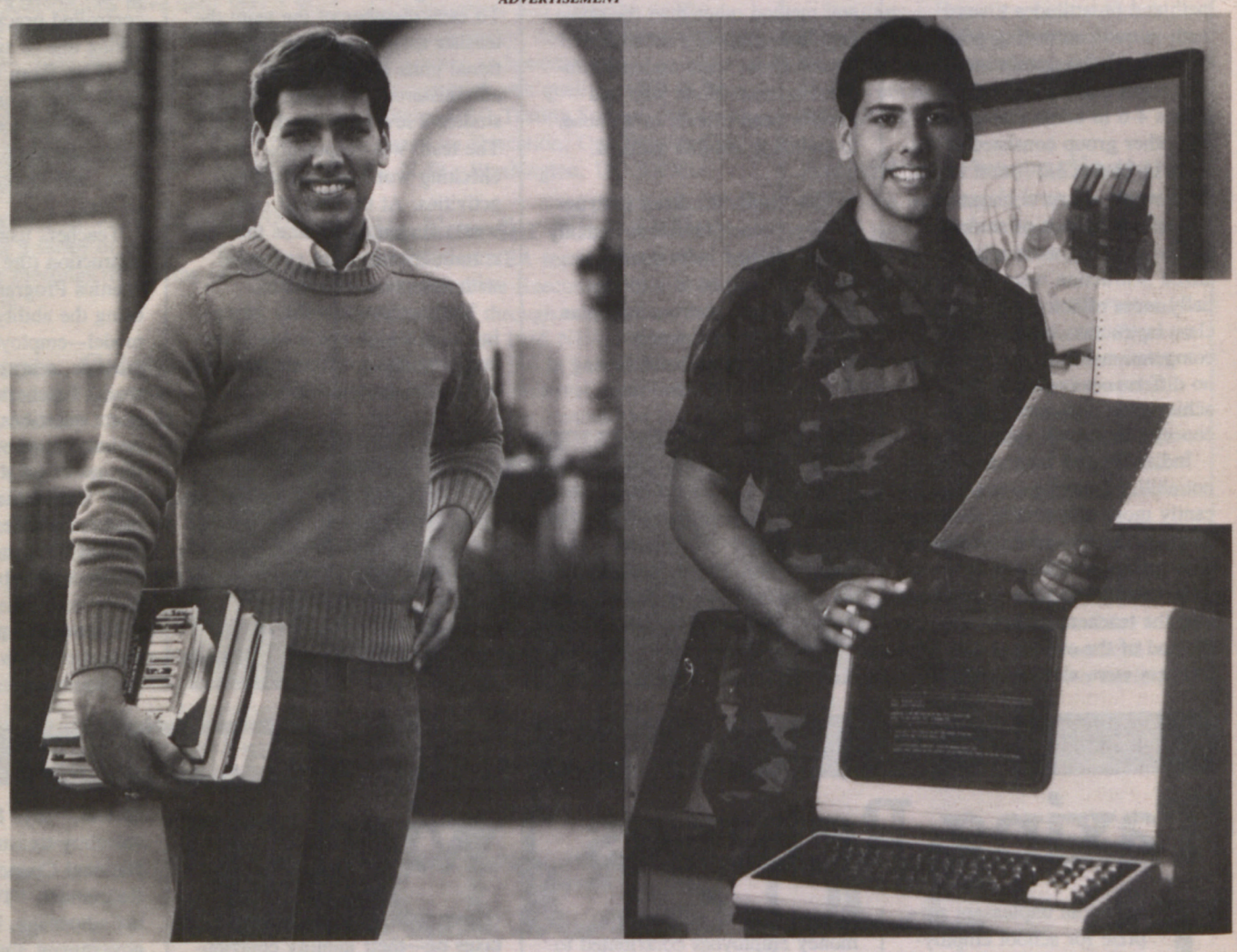

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Your students can find out more about ACES from their local Army Recruiter, who's listed in the Yellow Pages. Experience has taught us that the more our soldiers can learn, the better it makes the Army.

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How To End The Drudgery of Grading

Remarkable new calculator has enabled over 10,000 teachers to grade quickly and effortlessly

For the nearly 3 million teachers across the country, grading is a dreaded aspect of an otherwise most rewarding profession.

Countless hours are spent converting back and forth between letters and numbers. Adding them. Averaging them. Verifying them. Then putting them altogether into final grades for each of your many students.

In short, grading robs you of valuable time that could be spent working with students, preparing classes or doing the things you want to do outside the classroom.

But thanks to an amazing new calculator, you can now put an end to tedious and time-consuming grading computations.

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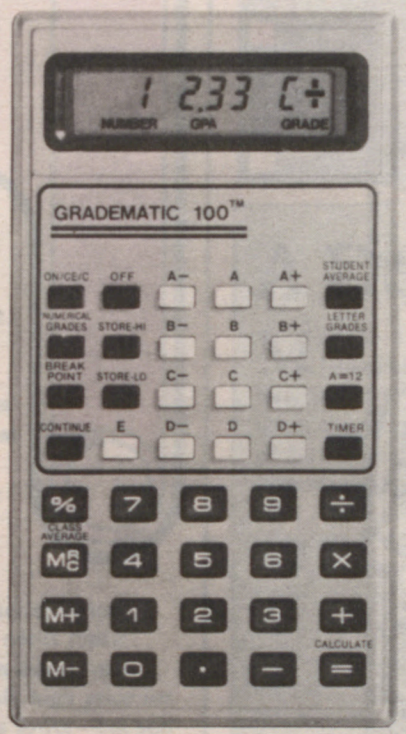
Whether you use letter grades, numerical scores or a combination of both, the GradeMatic 100 grading calculator will save you hours upon hours each marking period.

- **For letter grades** you enter directly on the patented letter-grade keyboard – just as you read them off a grade book. Then simply press the "Student Average" key and instantly the GradeMatic gives you the correct final grade.

It even allows you to "weight" assignments of different point values – without formulas.

- **For numerical grades you set** the high and low passing point totals – for a single assignment or semester's worth of tests and assignments – enter the students' scores and again simply press the "Student Average" key to find the proper grade – from your scale.
- **In either grading mode, you can** enter up to 99 grades per student and the calculator automatically keeps Class Averages for up to 99 students per class.
- **You can even time tests or** activities with GradeMatic's built-in Stop Watch/Timer Alarm (with 3-second buzzer).



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And the GradeMatic lets you grade where you want and when you want. Measuring a mere 2¾ x 5¼ x ¼", it fits easily in your purse or pocket. It's also the last calculator you'll ever need since it performs standard math functions and even features percent, memory and battery-saving auto shut-off.

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BOOK BEAT

Forgetting the Middle

Criticizing high schools has "plainly become a national pastime since World War II," say education researchers Arthur Powell, Eleanor Farrar, and David Cohen, authors of *The Shopping Mall High School*.

Of all the recent school critiques, this one strikes me as the most accurate, the most scathing—and the most compassionate. As a teacher in a large metropolitan high school, I am amazed, consoled, and a bit horrified to see how the 15 schools across the country that were chosen for this investigation are so similar to mine.

Like its predecessor study—Theodore Sizer's *Horace's Compromise—The Shopping Mall High School* was commissioned jointly by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools.

The authors unearthed a fundamental dilemma: society insists that a high school education is everyone's right, yet there's no agreement as to what that education should be.

To resolve the dilemma, we have created high schools in which students are free to choose from a variety of educations—much like customers wandering through a mall, doing business with whatever shops they wish. Students who agree to come to the mall and not cause major trouble are virtually guaranteed a diploma certifying they've gotten the education that is their right.

Powell, Farrar, and Cohen contend that the shopping mall high school is a great success on its face. "In most communities and for most students, the mall works well," they say, "because it is so exclusively governed by consumer choice. Learning is voluntary; it is one of the many things for sale."

Yet high schools unwittingly reinforce anti-intellectualism rather than challenge it, the authors charge. Schools "do not regard themselves as a countervailing force, a last citadel competing on behalf of students against the popular culture. The schools have done a masterly job at selling the importance of high school attendance, but have failed in the attempt to sell to most students the value of working hard to learn to use one's mind."

Public high schools serve best the students who get into the "specialty shops," such as special education, advanced placement courses, or band—areas that have powerful advocates both inside and outside the school.

Public schools serve worst the average students—"the unspecial," who are "the Achilles' heel of the shopping mall high school." Too often, such students drift through the mall—unchallenged, uninspired, and unknown by teachers and administrators.

Those words and many others in *The Shoppping Mall High School* are painful ones for high school teachers to read, yet the book conveys a compassion and a perspective that put it squarely on the side of able, dedicated teachers.

The authors also explode the myth that private schools are doing a better job than public schools. For bright, highly motivated students, they point out, the public schools—with their high-powered honors courses and competitive activities—may be the best place. For average, unspecial students, the smaller, more personal private schools may be better.

Powell, Farrar, and Cohen offer no easy answers to the problems that beset public high schools, but they make it clear that many of the reforms that legislatures and state departments of education are pushing amount to more of the same and promise to have little lasting effect.

Real change, they insist, will mean that all students are actively pushed to use their minds to the fullest and are known personally by at least some adults in their school. For that to come about, there must be at least "a rearrangement of how students and teachers spend time in school. Too much time is presently spent in class."

Teachers, the authors assert, must be a main force in changing schools, but the consumers—students and parents—should also play major roles. What must be mobilized, they conclude, is "greater consumer awareness: the shock of recognition that institutions that serve the savvy and powerful well serve others badly."

My only reservation about *The Shopping Mall High School* is that at times the authors don't seem to comprehend the horrible academic shape so many kids are in by the time they reach high school. There appears to be a hidden assumption that all students are receptive vessels eager to be filled with learning as soon as we teachers raise our expectations. At several points I found myself wondering when was the last time these researchers left their campuses and think tanks to spend a few years trying to inspire classes of 18-year-olds who read at fifth grade level, have children of their own, and work 20 hours a week outside of school.

Despite that reservation, however, *The Shopping Mall High School*, like *Horace's Compromise*, captures not only the problems but also the pulse of high school life. It manages to prick the conscience and delight the mind at the same time. □

The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace

by Arthur G. Powell (center), Eleanor Farrar, and David K. Cohen

(Houghton Mifflin. 360 pp. $16.95.)

Reviewed by Association member Patrick Welsh, who teaches English at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Va. Welsh's own school critique, Tales Out of School, *will be published this spring by Viking Press.*

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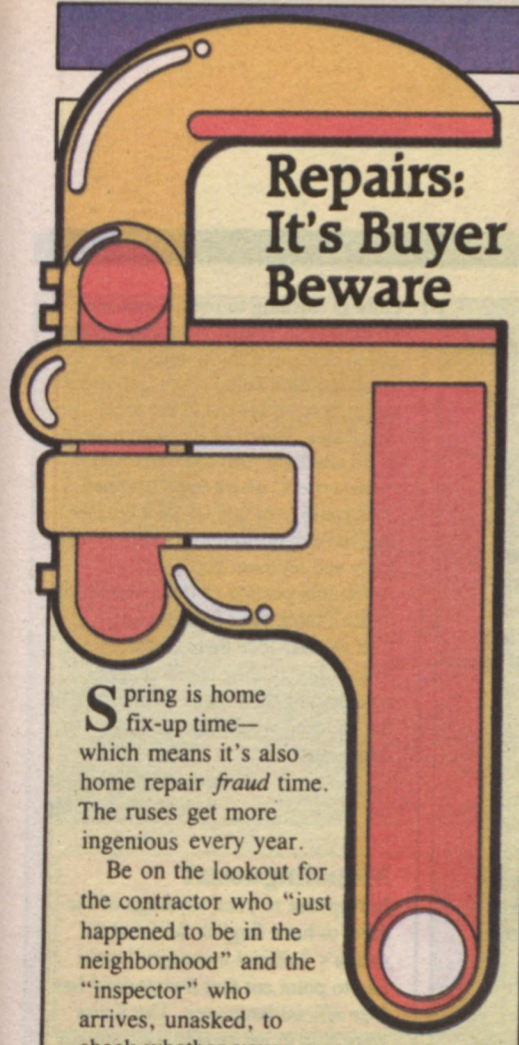


Repairs: It's Buyer Beware

Spring is home fix-up time—which means it's also home repair *fraud* time. The ruses get more ingenious every year.

Be on the lookout for the contractor who "just happened to be in the neighborhood" and the "inspector" who arrives, unasked, to check whether your furnace/roof/water heater/electrical wiring/sewage system needs repair.

Some crooks work in teams; one quotes you a ridiculously high price for a job so that the other's lower—but still exorbitant—bid will seem reasonable.

Another trick is to quote a very low price, then reveal that you'll have to pay extra if you don't want substandard materials. Or the "contractor" may simply vanish with your deposit money.

Here's how to pick a reliable home repair contractor:

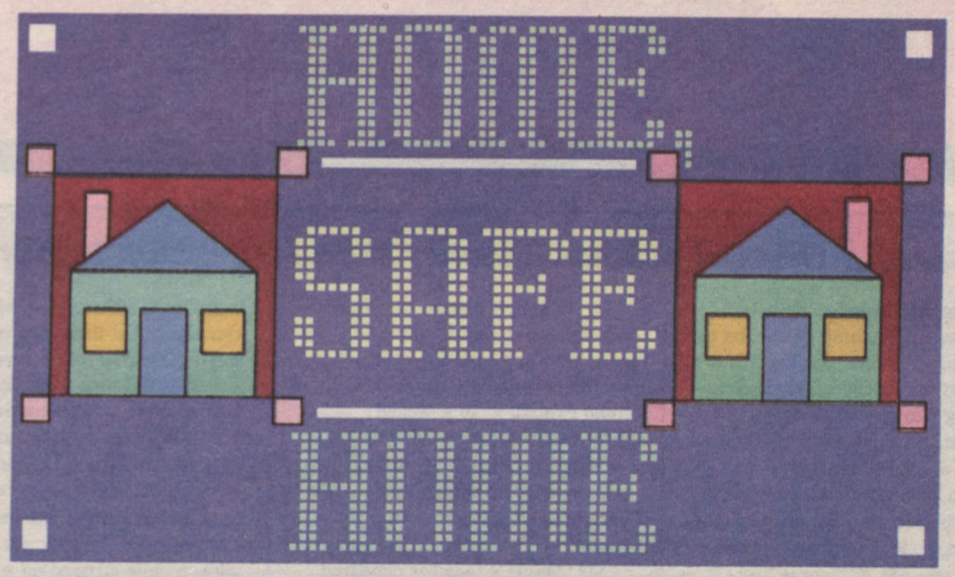
1. Shop around—get at least three bids. Obviously, if one is very high you'll want to avoid it. Less obviously, if one seems extremely low you *don't* want to leap at it. First ask *why* the contractor is able to offer lower prices than everyone else.

2. If the job is complex, get a written estimate. Be sure it specifies not only the price and payment method, but also the quality of the materials to be used, completion dates, responsibility for trash removal, and liability for unforeseen events. Get the contractor to put all verbal promises on paper before work begins.

3. Ask for references, and check them. A reputable person will be more than happy to refer you to satisfied customers. Also check with your local Better Business Bureau or other consumer group. Be very wary of someone who is "new" to the business—maybe he's just changed the name of his business to avoid angry customers. Also be wary of anyone who seems hard to get hold of, or who doesn't return phone calls promptly.

4. If the job is a major one, ask to see proof of adequate insurance and any applicable licensing.

Remember that a successful fraud takes two people: a con artist and a lazy or greedy homeowner. Act cautiously, and don't be afraid to miss a bargain that's "too good to be true"—it probably is!



A Dead Alarm Is No Alarm

More than three-fourths of U.S. households contain smoke detectors. But at any given time, according to national surveys, as many as one-third of those devices aren't working.

Smoke detectors are useless if they need repair, if they're improperly installed, if you don't have enough, if they're the wrong kind—or, most tragic of all, if they're still in their boxes awaiting installation.

If you don't have a working smoke detector, resolve to remedy the situation this very weekend. Prices are low, and most insurance companies will lower your homeowners insurance premium if you have detectors—the savings will probably cover their cost in the first year.

If you have just one smoke detector, you may need more. One detector may do for a small apartment, but the average multilevel home needs several. Otherwise, a fire that breaks out in a remote part of the house could do serious damage before any smoke reaches the detector.

Smoke, like heat, rises, so place detectors on the ceiling or high on the wall. Never put one near an air conditioner or heating vent that might blow smoke away from it.

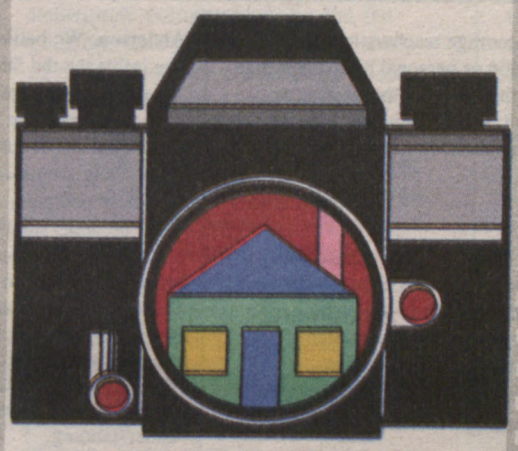
Safety experts suggest buying several types of smoke detectors to compensate for their different strengths and weaknesses. The two basic types are ionization and photoelectric.

Ionization detectors are extremely sensitive. Cigarette smoke or cooking can set them off, so they're best used in locations such as bedrooms. Photoelectric types respond only to thick smoke, so they work better with smoldering fires. Put them in the kitchen and basement, where an ionization type would give false alarms.

Detectors also have different power sources. Battery-operated alarms are easy to install and will work even when the power is disrupted, but you may forget to test and replace the batteries. Detectors that have been wired into the regular power supply are more reliable but more expensive—and an electrical fire can short them out before they give the alarm. Experts say that if possible, your fire detection system should include both types of units.

If you already have detectors, check them regularly. Worn-out batteries are the chief cause of equipment failure, so check the power supply frequently. Test the smoke sensors themselves occasionally, too, with a candle you've pinched to make it smolder. Replace old batteries or faulty units immediately.

What You Own Is Best Kept on Film



An inventory of everything you own is essential for getting the most out of your homeowners insurance. Should a disaster strike, an up-to-date, room-by-room list of your possessions will not only ensure that you quickly receive the full compensation you're entitled to, but also prevent a lot of extra headaches at a time when you'll already be under emotional strain.

Writing an inventory is a tedious chore—but *photographing* one is no problem. You can use either a 35mm or a video camera; in either case, the principles will be the same. If you're using a still camera, for example, here's what to do:

Buy several rolls of color slide film—slides are cheap to develop and can be projected to show details. Start by going to each room and taking pictures from enough angles to cover all the contents. These photos will not only provide an overview of what you own but will show the conditions of kitchen cabinets, counter tops, and other fixtures. Be sure nothing gets left out—drapes, rugs, ceiling fans.

Next, go back and take a picture of every item in the house. Some whole categories will need only a single slide—for instance, one shot of one dining room chair if you have several alike. Other pieces of furniture may need several views. You may be able to group some smaller items, but don't try to squeeze in too many. Be sure the picture shows the important details that prove how valuable something is. On electronic equipment, for example, be sure the make and model can be identified. For an antique, take separate close-up shots of any details that make it special.

Finally, photograph the contents of every cupboard and closet. Start with a single shot that shows how full it is—get close enough so the viewer can count the dishes or the shirts. Then take samples out and photograph them for greater detail. Lay clothing on contrasting backgrounds. Be sure the individual patterns of china and silver can be identified.

If you own a collection of coins, art, or other valuable objects, you may want to pay a professional photographer to take the pictures so the images will be as clear as possible.

As soon as the slides are developed, sit down and label each one. Arrange them by room, type of item, or any other way you like. Put any receipts, appraisals, or other proofs of value into an envelope. Then put the slides and envelope somewhere secure, like a safety deposit box. *Don't* keep them in your home. (What good will your inventory be if it burns up along with the contents of your house?)

Once you create a photo inventory, don't sit back and forget it. Every time you buy something or make an improvement to your home, photograph it, attach all receipts, and file it with the rest of your pictures.

For more information about getting the most out of your homeowners insurance, write to the NEA Special Services Response Center, 51 Monroe St., Suite 200, Rockville, MD 20850 for a free copy of "Homeowners Insurance: A Consumer's Guide for NEA Members." □

Letters

All-Day Kindergarten?

I'm inclined to agree with Elizabeth Truax ("Debate," Jan.-Feb.) that five-year-olds do not need a full day of school. The whole world is a schoolhouse, so to speak. Children continue learning beyond the classroom. They need time to be by themselves away from school schedules and demands; time to do nothing and have their world less defined for them.

School has its place in a child's life, but so do family and outside interests. Children grow at different rates, and all-day kindergarten isn't going to hasten their growth. In fact, it may damage the "budding flower" by subtly forcing it to bloom too soon.

Dorothy Hewitt
Fair Lawn, New Jersey

Many of today's kindergartners *are* ready to learn academics; many are not. Is there any shame on those who aren't yet ready?

I've taught kindergarten since 1973. I've seen children who were not ready to learn in first grade, whose parents had them tested for learning disabilities because they could not accept the fact that their child needed more time!

Society teaches us that we must work and learn and succeed at a fast pace, but each child is special and learns at a different rate—and there is nothing wrong with that.

I concur with all-day kindergartens because I rarely ever complete all my plans in one day (and I am the one who needs the rest time!). However, I don't *teach* academics, I *expose* children to them.

Young children should be allowed to explore and discover, to be creative, to experience and learn in their own time. The quantity of time they spend in school doesn't mean a hill of beans, but the *quality* does. Let them explore, fantasize, verbalize, play—and learn in spite of it. A child is only a child once; let each kindergartner *be* a child.

Sue Johnson
Mount Holly, North Carolina

Debates: Two Sides

Your November debate on calculators in the classroom illustrates again the tendency in education to develop positions based on opinion and assertion rather than objective data. The majority of assertions in the November debate are research questions. By using a debate format you encourage teachers to respond to opinion or personal bias rather than to test the issue for themselves or seek out research studies. You do your membership a disservice.

David H. Ost
Auburn, Alabama

I enjoy your monthly debate columns very much. These debates have become valuable in my writing classes as excellent examples of persuasive writing. Thanks.

Valerie Warnecke
Mesa, Arizona

Seeking Help

To help our science students learn the difference between a hypothesis and a theory, we need to correspond with people throughout the *NEA Today* reader area who were born on the following dates: December 13, 1931; December 11, 1932; May 28, 1933; May 27, 1934; June 23, 1935; June 21, 1936.

If one of these is your date of birth, please send me a card with your mailing address. Thank you!

M. Ware
Butler Middle School
7530 South 2700 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84121

My students and colleagues at North Davidson Senior High School and I ask your students to join us in a letter-writing campaign on behalf of the American hostages being held in Lebanon by the Islamic Jihad, a Shiite Moslem group.

We have the support of Peggy Say, the sister of hostage Terry Anderson. We believe our letters can influence the fate of the hostages.

I suggest these guidelines:

1. Greetings can be *Dear Friend.*
2. Students should tell something about themselves and request Lebanese pen pals.
3. Students should ask that the six captive Americans be released and allowed to return to the U.S., and that any other hostages be allowed to return to their countries. Language must be nonviolent.
4. The letters should stress the importance of peace through understanding.
5. Letters should be sent via airmail (44¢ postage) to Hussein Musawi, Baalbek, Lebanon.
6. Return addresses, ending with *USA*, should be legible in the upper left corner of each envelope.

Betty B. James
Lexington, North Carolina

I am conducting a research project for the Center for Language Education and Research to determine the components of successful small group and cooperative learning programs for non-native English speakers. The project is funded by the National Institute of Education.

If you're involved in a successful program where there is face-to-face interaction and peer learning, please contact me with the following information: ages and language groups of students served, content focus of the program, program structure and curriculum materials developed, and outcomes for content and language development.

The information collected will be compiled for distribution to teachers of non-native English speakers, and all programs responding will receive copies of the report.

Evelyn Jacob
Center for Applied Lingistics
1118 22nd St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20037

Recruiting the Best

Most students in the college of education begin student teaching in their senior year. By this time, they have four years of their lives and money invested in what will be their future. Even if they were never meant to be teachers, the critic teacher too frequently feels sorry for these students and gives them a favorable report.

I propose that all colleges of education require student teaching at the beginning of the junior year. Critic teachers would be in a better position to require excellence. Student teachers would have an opportunity to realize that teaching might not be suitable for them—and still have two or more years to adjust their curriculum to meet their needs and those of the labor market.

Ed Skolarus
Carleton, Michigan

Я's Aren't Cute

I am appalled that nothing has been done to protest a national chain store's signs, which prominently feature a reversed R.

As a reading specialist teaching children who are having some difficulty in learning to read, I can see no beneficial results from this—only added confusion in the minds of small children being taken into these stores. I have contacted the local franchises, which claim to be unable to do anything, and the corporate headquarters, which hasn't replied.

If you live in one of the 21 states that have these stores, please contact them and let them know that a substantial portion of the community doesn't think their logo is cute. Can we convince them that the positive publicity they could generate by changing their signs for the sake of the children would far outweigh their costs?

Dorothea F. Peterjohn
Worthington, Ohio

Monolinguosis?

In response to your coverage of the drive to have English declared the nation's "official language," we'd like to point out that Switzerland has four official languages. The Swiss were able to get around a potentially controversial situation and turn it into an economic advantage.

Thanks to laws requiring product labels, government documents, and the like to be published in all official languages, as well as the teaching of the various languages in the schools, many citizens have acquired multiple language skills. This has not only given the Swiss an advantage in international business and tourism, but has also done much to promote their image as world peacemakers.

Isn't it interesting that those who lobby against multilingualism are usually monolingual, have traveled little, and lack a basic understanding of international relations?

Tam Agosti-Gisler
Anne Arruda
Anchorage, Alaska

Thanks!

I just wanted to say how enlightening your publication has been. I've enjoyed the short articles and especially all the wonderful colored graphics. They make *NEA Today* a truly attractive and visually exciting paper, as well as an informative one.

Kathy Martin
Tacoma, Washington

I'm impressed to note the generous amount of space you allocate to letters presenting diverse and *opposing* views on material previously printed in *NEA Today.*

You show courage, wisdom, and a pointed, significant lesson for the educational community to adopt in the classroom: "Be balanced; be fair!"

Philip P. Shaps
Brooklyn, New York

Salute to a Devoted Science Teacher Who Fell Victim to Burnout

The first time I saw an amoeba I was kneeling in damp grass next to a golf course pond, peering into a reflector microscope. I remember thinking that until that very moment, at the sage age of 10, I had not yet started living life. I became fascinated with everything.

The person who fed this urgent yearning to turn over each rock I passed was Mr. ("George" to adults) Mayer, a middle-aged science teacher in a small public school system in New Jersey who liked to spend his Saturdays adjusting the reflectors on class microscopes. A handful of us would turn out to entrap a frog, search the mud for raccoon tracks, test the water.

In his class, we learned how paramecia multiplied by watching them divide. We knew xylem and phloem, the tissues of plants that carry nutrients. We made our own electrical generators. One day Mr. Mayer asked if any of us had any scabs to pick, a prospect that shocked and thrilled us, so that we might examine red blood cells under the microscope. He had several volunteers.

For us preadolescents, the world was bounded by the river and the busiest street. In our elementary classrooms, Mr. Mayer began unraveling the mysteries of the world outside those blocks.

By the time we were 12, we all turned on household lights and knew why and how they came on. When we saw a rainbow, we could explain it. In a brazen show of our growing knowledge, we asked for H_20 at the dinner table—and were disappointed when our parents understood what we meant.

Mr. Mayer's face has appeared in my thoughts hundreds of times since I last saw him in 1969. He is responsible for my enrolling in college science courses and subscribing to science magazines, and his memory almost lured me into teaching. He is the only teacher I ever had who made it easy to look forward to tests; we always learned something from them.

Recently, I called the school asking for Mr. Mayer, who is now 62. I was told he had become unhappy and quit, three years ago, ending a 25-year career. I tracked him to Morrisville, Pennsylvania.

"It got so nobody seemed to care," came the familiar voice over the telephone, without the familiar enthusiasm. "I just began to fade away.

"Oh, I loved teaching in the early days. The kids didn't change, but the school did. There was no more science. No more money for equipment. One year the school board bought these kits, where the kids worked at their own pace and dealt with a lot of physics. The kits would change from year to year so there was no continuity."

The Saturday expeditions to the golf course pond, I learned, were all volunteer hours contributed by Mr. Mayer and his wife. They stopped the year after I left, when a child stepped on a nail and school insurance wouldn't cover the cost to patch the foot.

"I tried to get them to insure us, but they wouldn't," Mr. Mayer told me. "And then the science fair fell apart. Somebody decided it would be better to have a talent show instead, so the kids played banjos and sang and things like that on science fair day, and there was no more science fair.

"You know, the pay wasn't good, but you accept that when you go in. It's the lost enthusiasm that gets you. It's not being able to get equipment. You get burned out."

Mr. Mayer is now selling antiques—a quiet and thoughtful business full of hidden treasures, like a pond. He invited me down; he and his wife would put me up in the 18th century house they have recently refurbished. Their house is wonderful, Mr. Mayer said, with lots of history. I could learn a lot.

Christine Lavin
Burlington, Vermont

What's *your* opinion? NEA members are cordially invited to use this page to exchange ideas with their colleagues around the nation. We reserve the right to edit letters for length. Address correspondence to "Letters," NEA Today, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Debate

Has consolidation of schools gone too far?

Wagner Studio

YES

Naomi Dunn teaches language arts (grades 5 through 8) at Gate School in northwestern Oklahoma, near the Kansas border. She serves on the Beaver County Education Association's executive committee and the Oklahoma Education Association's board of directors. Oklahoma's 613 public school districts enroll a total of 614,082 students.

School consolidation is often cited as the cure for education's ills. While it may offer a few advantages, it more often merely compounds existing problems.

As educators, we know how important it is that every student receive individualized attention. Children who are learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, or gifted especially need to be identified as soon as possible so we can help them develop to their full potential. In a large school, borderline cases may go unnoticed—and consequently ignored.

Small schools, with their small classes, give teachers a better chance to know and observe students and their personal and academic problems. The teacher has the time to give children the attention they need and to help those with mild disabilities overcome their difficulties.

A small school allows average students to develop their abilities and talents, too, in a way that a big, consolidated school can't. The mother of two of my students attended a large urban school. She was an average student, she told me, but very shy. Because no one encouraged her to participate in classroom discussions, no one realized her potential.

Now she sees her two daughters benefit because the teachers in our school expect each child to participate in class. Our students aren't afraid to enter into a discussion, because they know one another well. The encouragement we give them helps develop their self-confidence.

The fewer students a school has, the more opportunities it can offer for them to participate in extracurricular activities. Some students who have come to our school from larger ones have developed outstanding talents in music and sports here, simply because of this greater opportunity.

The belief that small schools tend to have less qualified teachers is a misconception. Teachers in small schools are often graduates of those very same schools; they live in the community and know the students. Usually these teachers have better than average qualifications, and continuing education is one of their prime concerns. And because teacher turnover is very low, there is greater continuity in teaching.

A teacher in our school who previously taught in a large urban school observes that discipline is easier to maintain here. Our students have a strong sense of identity and of belonging to the whole. They know all the teachers well and have learned to respect and obey them.

Those who argue for consolidation say that small schools aren't equipped to offer as many academic courses as large ones, but modern technology is changing that. Many schools are working cooperatively to set up satellite systems to obtain classes they're not financially able to offer.

Schools also are cooperating with one another to offer computer classes. Other systems use traveling teachers—specialists in certain subjects who spend half their time in one school and half in another.

Another factor to be considered is transportation. Many rural students already spend three to four hours a day on a school bus. If their schools are consolidated, they'll spend even more hours there.

We can't allow consolidation fever to make further inroads into the health of education. The welfare of the student must always be the primary consideration. In the small school, the individual has great importance and always will. We must keep the small school alive. □

New Jersey Newsphotos

NO

Mary Ellen Starn teaches elementary gifted and talented students in the Galloway Township (N.J.) schools, just north of Atlantic City. She's president of the Galloway Township Education and Support Staff Association and chairs NJEA's Government Relations Committee for Atlantic County. New Jersey's 616 public school districts serve 1,129,223 students.

As educators, we must first and foremost ask what we can do for our students. How can we maximize their opportunities to learn, so that all students will reach their full potential?

Of course there are always hurdles in our way, and we all know them: lack of adequate facilities and materials, insufficient funds, shortage of specialized personnel, lack of time, inadequate communication—the list goes on. One way to overcome some of these persistent obstacles is to consolidate facilities, personnel, and curriculum.

Consolidation is most often thought of as the merging of local districts, but it can also be achieved on a smaller scale within a district, especially one that covers a vast area. I teach in a district that spans 94 square miles.

I admit that consolidation is not a cure-all. The particular circumstances of a district and its community must be considered before consolidating schools. There must be a positive commitment on the part of the staff, administration, school board, and parents to ensure the success of the program without loss of local autonomy.

If any reorganization is to take place, it should occur to correct inadequacies in the present structure, not to meet some arbitrary enrollment standard or to cut taxes. Transferred employees—teachers and support staff—should retain their jobs with full rights, benefits, and salaries.

Under the right circumstances, consolidation can offer real benefits. Bringing together compatible grade levels from several small schools into a single, larger facility allows more curriculum offerings. Students can be better prepared for an advanced technological world, they can attend classes composed according to their needs and abilities, and—in elementary and middle schools—they can participate in exploratory programs in such disciplines as foreign languages, computer literacy, and instrumental music. Special education classes and classes for the gifted and talented become part of the curriculum.

The staffs of larger, consolidated schools are more likely to include health counselors, guidance counselors, learning disability experts, speech therapists, child psychologists, and other specialists. And larger schools often offer a wider variety of extracurricular activities than small schools can. Streamlined bus transportation gives students the opportunity to participate in stage productions, publications, sports, band, and various other activities.

Many elementary schools in smaller districts can't afford to have fully stocked libraries and gymnasiums. In larger schools, facilities such as libraries and gymnasiums are more cost-effective because they're used by a greater number of students.

The school staff benefits too. Teachers can be assigned to areas of strength and specialization. The number of grade levels and subject areas they teach is greatly reduced. They can share concerns and problems, materials and ideas, with other teachers of similar grade levels.

A larger structure also allows for regular scheduling of teacher preparation periods; elementary teachers no longer have to wait for a phys ed or music teacher to take over their classes before they get released time.

As educators, we always strive to provide the best possible learning environment for our students. In my district, consolidation does help provide that environment—along with a continuity of curriculum and a philosophy that is child-oriented. □

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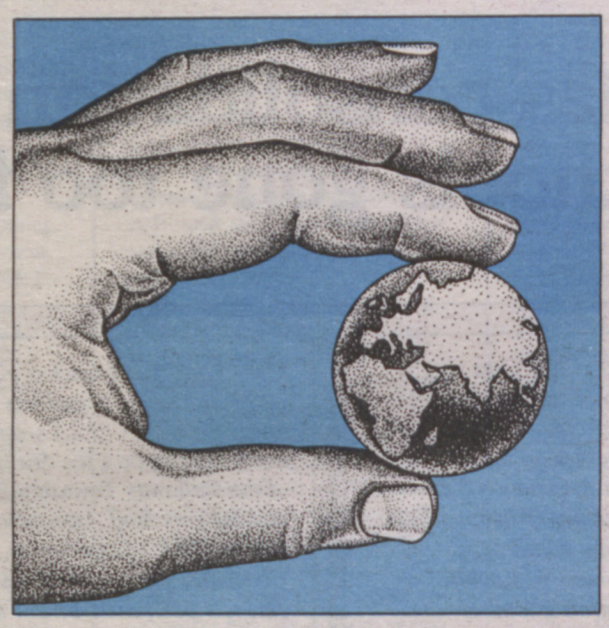

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